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### The Smoky Hill Trail In Western Kansas, 1859-1869

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THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL IN WESTERN KANSAS, 1859-1869

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Science

by

John W. Neyer, A. B.

Fort Hays Kansas State College

Date 5-15-50

Approved

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Chairman Graduate Council

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Denver in 1874, the story of this trail as it developed in the context of Western History.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to point out the importance of the Smoky Hill trail. The major purpose is to point out the importance of the trail between the present-day Fitch's Meadows, Kansas and the western boundary of Kansas, since this trail was partly a new trail, partly an old trail, and partly a new trail.

### Method of Research

A study was made of the manuscript, book, and newspaper collections of the James H. Smith Research Library at Leavenworth, Kansas. The newspaper and map files of this library were also examined.

A similar study was made of the newspaper files, books, and maps of the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado. At the Colorado State Historical Library, Denver, Colorado, an investigation of the manuscript and map collections was made.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The major events in the history of the Smoky Hill Trail occurred during the 1859-1869 decade. From the time of the Colorado gold rush in 1859, until the completion of the railroad from Kansas City to Denver in 1870, the story of this trail is of interest to the student of Western History.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to point out the importance of the Smoky Hill Trail. The major emphasis is placed upon the section of the trail between the present day Ellsworth, Kansas, and the western boundary of Kansas, since this section has received but small notice in previous studies.

#### Method of Research

A study was made of the manuscript, book, and newspaper clipping collections of the Kansas State Historical Society Library at Topeka, Kansas. The newspaper and map files of this society were also examined.

A similar study was made of the newspaper files, magazines and books of the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado. At the Colorado State Historical Library, Denver, Colorado, an investigation of the manuscript and rare book collections was made.

A short interview with Mr. Howard C. Raynesford, Ellis, Kansas, and another with Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen, director of the Colorado State Historical Society, were useful in locating certain materials.

Letters were sent to organizations and individuals who might possess some information on the subject. These completed the research.

#### Previous Studies on This Subject

Margaret Long, M. D., Denver, Colorado, has published a book entitled The Smoky Hill Trail, Following The Old Historic Pioneer Trails on the Modern Highways, in which she deals mainly with the Colorado section of the trail.

William Johnstone wrote a History of the Smoky Hill Trail, excerpts of which appeared in the Denver Post in 1929; however, this account was a very general one and did not deal with the Western Kansas section of the trail to any great extent.

In her master's thesis at the University of Colorado entitled Transportations to Colorado, 1858-1869, Carla E. Neuhaus gives a rather brief account of this trail.

Howard C. Raynesford has a short manuscript entitled The Smoky Hill Trail in the collections of the Kansas State Historical Library. This manuscript is an account of a talk which he gave to the Rotarians of Ellis, Kansas, on January 23, 1935.

#### Early Events Along the Route of the Trail

On July 8, 1844, John C. Fremont and his group of explorers camped near the junction of several streams which they later discovered

to be the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River. Fremont's party followed this river for about two hundred miles, then leaving the river at a point where it made a huge bend to the northeast, this group continued in an easterly direction and arrived at the town of Kansas on the last day of July. This was the first extensive exploration of the course of the Smoky Hill River, and Fremont's report shows that he was impressed with the green prairie and groves of cottonwood trees along the river's entire length.<sup>1</sup>

Although Fremont's report suggested the importance of the Smoky Hill Valley as a natural highway, nothing was done about laying out a trail along this river until gold was discovered in the Pikes Peak area in 1858. People wished to get to the gold fields as soon as possible, thus some adventurers sought to find the shortest route between the Missouri River towns and the gold fields.

The old routes to Denver were the Northern or Platte River Route, and the Southern or Arkansas River Route; but some men in their eagerness to make a quick strike would not take either of these routes which they believed to be longer than a route directly west up the Kaw River and its tributary the Smoky Hill. Thus it was that some men began to follow this latter river in their journeys, and word was passed along that a new and shorter route had been found to the gold fields of Colorado.

---

1. The Life of Col. John Charles Fremont, and His Narrative of Explorations and Adventures, in Kansas, Nebraska, Oregon and California, The Memoir by Samuel M. Smucker (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1856), pp. 489-492.



One such adventurer was Jesse L. Pritchard, who, in 1859, followed the Smoky Hill River while attempting to reach the gold fields. He notes that his group followed the northern bank of the river and kept close to it so they would have water when they set up camp at night. This outfit had only one wagon drawn by oxen. When they had loaded their equipment and provisions on the wagon, they found that the animals could draw nothing else, therefore the men had to walk. Pritchard records that they walked a distance of 680 miles in fifty-three days on this trip.<sup>2</sup>

William B. Parsons was another prospector who followed the route of the Smoky Hill to the gold region. Parsons claimed that those following the Smoky Hill Fork of the Kaw River would find grass a month earlier than on the other routes. He professed a belief that between Leavenworth and the gold fields, the route up the Smoky Hill Fork was "the nearest, most direct, and the best route."<sup>3</sup>

A man named Walsh claimed that it took him but twenty-two days to travel from Denver to Leavenworth via the Smoky Hill Route. He arrived in Leavenworth, Kansas, on March 15, 1859, and stated that the Smoky Hill Route was "covered with emigrants, proceeding in every imaginable conveyance."<sup>4</sup>

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2. Jesse L. Pritchard, "To Pike's Peak in Search of Gold in 1859," The Trail, IV (September, 1911), p. 11. Pritchard says they followed this route since it was "the central and--supposed to be--shorter one."

3. John W. Oliver, Guide to the New Gold Region of Western Kansas and Nebraska with Table of Distances and an Accurate Map (New York: John W. Oliver, 1859), p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 14.



All the reports concerning the new Smoky Hill Route were not as favorable as these. There were some who felt that it was the least desirable trail a man could take to the gold region.

One such critic was a certain A. J. B. who wrote from Agnes City, K. T., on February 25, 1859, concerning an article that appeared in the Kansas Herald of February 19. This article supported the Smoky Hill Route in preference to the Santa Fe road as the former was claimed to be 150 miles shorter than the latter; but A. J. B. claimed that the article was a "wilful misrepresentation" of the facts. He argued that the Smoky Hill Route between Leavenworth and Fort Riley was crossed by numerous large streams with "perpendicular banks and muddy bottoms." Among the major obstacles that he noted were numerous unfordable streams, with no bridges or boats, disastrous spring floods, and steep banks to be climbed. He claimed that the government had attempted to open a route through this "wilderness" but floods had washed away the bridges and the tall grass had destroyed all signs of a trail west of Fort Riley. This critic recommended that travelers should follow the Santa Fe road to the point where it touches the Arkansas, then follow this river to Bent's Fort, and travel north from there to the gold region. He praises this route for its hard surface and lack of obstacles, and notes that such men as Colonel Bent, Colonel Sumner and his command, and the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, all preferred this Southern route to that of the Smoky Hill. He estimates the distance from Kansas City to the Gold Fields as about six hundred miles by his proposed route. As witnesses for his statements concerning the Smoky Hill Route,

he gives the names and addresses of six men who had accompanied him "through that region in the fall of 1857."<sup>5</sup>

C. H. Withington was another person who supported the Arkansas River Route and advised against the Smoky Hill Route. Writing from Allen, K. T., on February 23, 1859, to James A. Hutchison, Kansas City, Missouri, who was expecting to go to the gold fields in the spring, Withington pointed out that the Smoky Hill Country was "the hardest country you ever saw." He pictured the bluffs as being from one to three hundred feet high, and inaccessible in many instances. According to his way of thinking, the only reason that some papers were supporting this route was their hope of having the emigrants pass through their towns. He stated that he had fourteen years of experience in the Territory and had seen most of it; thus he felt that his advice should be followed.<sup>6</sup>

James W. Hamilton of Palestine, Illinois, was yet another person who added his observations to the chorus of those who spoke ill of the Smoky Hill Route in the early part of 1859. He accused agents of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak express Company of having advised him to follow the Smoky Hill Route, and accordingly blamed them for the hardships that he claims to have encountered. After leaving Fort Riley, his party, which consisted of nineteen men, two mules, and seven ponies, traveled for about 125 miles through rough country in which every

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5. Kansas Herald, February 19, 1859, as cited in Kansas City Journal of Commerce, March 9, 1859.

6. Kansas City Journal of Commerce, March 5, 1859.

vestige of road vanished," but they found sufficient wood and water for their needs. Then for several days they encountered a desolate plain covered with nothing but sand; so they turned north and traveled for three days in search of timber but found none. After two additional days of wondering, they discovered their provisions were almost exhausted; so they turned southward and after four days, reached the Arkansas River about forty miles above Bent's Fort. For nine days the only things they had eaten were prickly pears and wild onions, plus one rattlesnake they had chanced to kill. Their suffering from lack of water was even greater.

Mr. Hamilton speaks also of five Frenchmen whom they had passed on the way, who had given up all hope of relief. He claims he never again heard of that party.

On his trip back from the gold region, Hamilton followed the Arkansas and Santa Fe roads which he calls "the best road I ever traveled of anything like its length." He claims to have seen wagons being drawn by one yoke of oxen where usually four yoke would be employed. Concerning this "best road" he records, "I met not a solitary case of suffering . . . the stock all looked well, the men cheerful and in fine spirits . . . the only complaint being that in some instances the Indians had stolen cattle."<sup>7</sup>

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7. Kansas City Journal of Commerce, May 25, 1859. It appears that Mr. Hamilton's party left Junction City about March 16. He claims that the agents represented the trail as being 250 miles shorter than any other route. The author of this paper feels that anyone should doubt the authenticity of such a claim.



There were still other reports of hardship along the Smoky Hill Route. One of the most noteworthy is the tale of the three brothers from Illinois who followed the Smoky Hill Route early in 1859. These brothers were supposedly given false information concerning the length of the trail, thus their supplies ran out in a short time and starvation became imminent. However, the one brother, as he expected to die shortly, requested the others to live off the flesh of his body, so that they might get through. The two stronger men did just this, but soon another one of the brothers died, and the third repeated the ghastly feast. This third brother was found by an Indian and cared for until a Leavenworth and Pike's Peak stage came along, and the Indian turned the brother over to the stage driver. Finally, after gaining some strength, this last brother did arrive at the gold fields and told his story.<sup>8</sup>

It was accounts like these last recited that influenced some critics of the Smoky Hill Route to refer to it as the "Starvation Route."<sup>9</sup>

Early in 1859, the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company did start operations along the Solomon River Valley. This organization's

8. Rocky Mountain News, May 14, 1859, as quoted in the Kansas Historical Quarterly, VII (May, 1938), p. 209. It seems that these brothers must have wandered quite some distance north of the Smoky Hill River in order to have the third one picked up by a coach of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Company, since that company was operating along the Solomon River at that time.

9. Nebraska News, April 28, 1860, as recorded in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXIII--46." This paper also gave an account of the three Illinois brothers and the hardships they endured in the previous year.

first coaches reached Denver on May 7, 1859, after a trip of nineteen days and 687 miles from Leavenworth. It was believed at this time that the opening of the Solomon Route would lessen the risk "of starvation and lingering death which so many unfortunate victims . . . met on the Smoky-hill route."<sup>10</sup>

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10. Rocky Mountain News, May 14, 1859, as quoted in the Kansas Historical Quarterly, VI (November, 1937), pp. 394-395. This article stated that the Solomon route would probably be shortened by about seventy-five miles by cut-offs. Frank Hall in his History of the State of Colorado seems to be referring to this first trip of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express coaches; however, he gives the date as June 7. Hall further states that since this was a safer thoroughfare for the travelers, they abandoned the "Indian-infested and inhospitable Smoky Hill." Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1889), pp. 213-214. Hall's reference to Indians on the Smoky Hill at that time is questionable, as no evidence exists to show that any trouble was encountered from Indians at that time.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND DISPATCH

#### Early Surveys and Accounts of the Proposed Route

As an aid to the prospective gold miners, many guides to the gold regions of Western Kansas Territory were published. These guides set forth the conditions to be encountered on the various routes to the mines and usually gave a table of distances as computed from the accounts of those who had traversed the named routes.

One of these guides seems to support the Southern or Arkansas River Route as the most suitable route to the gold fields. It suggests that the prospector should travel southwest from Kansas City to Council Grove; then go west along the bend of the Arkansas; thence along the Pawnee Fork hitting the Arkansas again at Bent's New Fort, from there west to Bent's Old Fort, to Pueblo then north to the gold region around Pikes Peak. It stated that the total distance along this route was 624 miles.

This same guide notes that a Captain George Smith would start with a company in April to follow the Smoky Hill Fork and establish a "more direct route from Kansas City and Lawrence to the mines."<sup>1</sup>

Another guide gives the distance between Leavenworth and Auraria by the Southern Route as 740 miles. By the Northern, or Fort Kearney

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1. Captain J. W. Gunnison and Colonel William Gilpin, Guide to The Kansas Gold Mines at Pike's Peak (Cincinnati: E. Mendenhall, 1859), pp. 13, 16-18.



Route, the distance between these same points is listed as 700 miles, while between Atchison and Auraria by the Northern Route the distance is 684 miles. This guide reports that the "Kansas Stage Company . . . contemplates stocking the central route, up the Smoky Hill Fork to the gold mines, on the opening of spring."<sup>2</sup>

The Oliver Guide gives distance along the Southern Route between Leavenworth and Cherry Creek as 705 miles, and along the Leavenworth-Fort Riley-Fort Kearney to Cherry Creek route as 678 miles. This guide then states that "another route has been highly spoken of by old Mountaineers or guides, and we know of two parties who next Spring intend to follow this route." It notes that these groups intend to follow the Smoky Hill Fork from Fort Riley to where it "heads near Cherry, Kiowa, Bijou and Vermillion Creeks, thus making it an air line from Leavenworth City." It suggests that such a route would be 565 miles in length.<sup>3</sup>

The Parker and Huyett Guide gave the distance between Leavenworth and Cherry Creek via the South Platte as 691 miles; and between the same two places via the Smoky Hill Route as 609 miles. A table of airline distances between Leavenworth and Pikes Peak are given with the total distance listed as 502 miles to Pikes Peak, or 562 miles to Cherry

2. O. B. Gunn, New Map and Hand-Book of Kansas and the Gold Mines (Pittsburgh: W. S. Haven, 1859), pp. 19, 46-47.

3. John W. Oliver, Guide to the New Gold Region of Western Kansas and Nebraska with Table of Distances and an Accurate Map (New York: John W. Oliver, 1859), pp. 18-20.

Creek. It notes that "some allowances must be made for the windings of the road."<sup>4</sup>

Early in 1860, a survey of a proposed route along the Smoky Hill between Leavenworth and Denver was made by a party of thirty-six men under the supervision of W. Green Russell. While this party was engaged in their work, reports reached Denver that Indians had attacked them. These reports were proven false when the group arrived in Denver on May 4, at which time Russell reported having seen two parties of Indians, neither of which troubled them in the least. Russell's report was very short, however he did estimate the distance between Leavenworth and Denver at 610 miles, and reported favorably on the entire route. He found plenty of wood, water, and grass along the route of travel except for a very few stretches. He further stated that antelope and buffalo were abundant along the road. Russell was of the opinion that in the dry season water would be very scarce along the seventy-five mile stretch west of Big Grove, a point near the present Kansas-Colorado boundary line.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Parker and Huyett, The Illustrated Miners' Hand-Book and Guide to Pike's Peak (Saint Louis: Parker and Huyett, 1859), pp. 64-66.

5. Rocky Mountain Herald, May 5, 1860, gives a short report of the expedition. It arrived at Denver on May 4, 1860. Rocky Mountain Herald, June 2, 1860, mentions a report from Russell to Mayor Denman of Leavenworth, which the mayor received on May 15, 1860. Reference is made to this survey in footnote to: Louise Barry, editor, "Albert D. Richardson's Letters on Pike's Peak Gold Region," Kansas Historical Quarterly, XII (February, 1943), p. 56. There appears to be a conflict as to this man's name, some accounts mention Green Russell, while others mention Russell Green; however, since a vast majority are signed W. G. Russell, it is this author's opinion that the correct name is William Green Russell.

Shortly after the completion of the Green Russell survey, another expedition was sent out by the people of Leavenworth to construct a road between that town and Denver via the Smoky Hill Route. This party consisted of one Superintendent, H. T. Green, one Chief Engineer, O. M. Tennison, three assistants, twenty-three construction men, and one boy, for a total of twenty-nine persons. They left Leavenworth on June 19, 1860, and arrived at Junction City on June 28. Between Junction City and Salina the road was in bad condition; so the construction detail repaired it. The party reached Salina on July 4.

From Salina the expedition followed the military road across the great bend of the Smoky Hill by way of Elm and Spring Creeks. Upon reaching the river again, they followed the northern bank and came to the vicinity of Big Creek about seventy-six miles west of Salina. Green stated in his report that coal was to be found in this area, and that thus far along the route, great stands of timber were encountered. He predicted that this area would support a large population "at no distant day."

From the vicinity of Big Creek, the party continued west to the forks of the Smoky Hill. Green states that the country along the South Fork is far superior to that along the North Fork, with better soil, grass, timber, and water. He observes that the emigrants to the gold mines suffered severely since they had followed the North Fork.

From Cottonwood Grove, the party traveled almost seventeen miles straight west, then they dug a well in one of the beds of sand. Next they traveled twenty-one miles to reach the Sandy Fork of the Arkansas



River. From this point to where Beaver Creek is reached, a distance of eighty-one miles, there was little timber along the route to Denver.<sup>6</sup>

The advance section of the party arrived at Colorado City on August 16. Before their arrival, reports circulated that they had encountered trouble with the Indians and had been cut off from their destination. This fear was forgotten when the party arrived safely; however, one member of the party, a man named Hodgson, did lose his life at the hands of some Kiowa Indians.<sup>7</sup>

O. M. Tonnison, writing to the editors of the Western Mountaineer, stated that since a number of false rumors were being circulated concerning the expedition, he felt he should correct them. He explained that the Indians need not be feared. While it was true that four Kiowas

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6. The party arrived at Colorado City on August 18, after sixty-one days on the road. They left there on August 21, and arrived at Denver, distance sixty miles, on August 24. Report and Map of the Superintendent and Engineer of the Smoky Hill Expedition Together with the Table of Distances (Leavenworth: Times Book and Job Establishment, 1861), pp. 7-12, 18-19. While at Manhattan, Kansas, Superintendent Green talked to the editors of a newspaper concerning the purpose of the trip. This paper reports that shippers were so satisfied with the practicability of the route and the ability of Mr. Green's party to build a good road, that many of them expected to return to the East by way of the Smoky Hill Route with their wagons--"probably 500 wagons in all." Manhattan Express, June 30, 1860, as recorded by George A. Root in the Kansas State Historical Society's "Trails Manuscripts," compiled January 2-10, 1941. Some sources claim that this expedition was sent out by the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company to find a shorter route for their Solomon River Valley line. See: George A. Root, op. cit.; Jessie Kennedy Snell, Lore of the Great Plains (Colby, Kansas: Free Press Tribune, 1937), p. 34.

7. The Western Mountaineer, August 30, 1860, as recorded in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXII-51."

had tried to steal cattle, and had killed the man who was herding the cattle after he had shot at them, Tennison felt this was the fault of the party as they had left the cattle "nearly half a mile from camp."<sup>8</sup>

Tennison noted that the spring and summer of 1860 had been very dry; and that on July 10 he had been able to walk across the bed of the Smoky Hill River without wetting his shoes, "thirty miles southwest of the town of Saline." He stated that he found water in the gravel of the stream bed when he made a small hole with the heel of his shoe. By his account they reached Big Grove on July 27, having followed a good road all the way and at no time between Saline and Big Grove was it over twelve miles between water stations.

Engineer Tennison objected to the route on one point; he thought it followed the "meanders" of the river too closely, thus lengthening the distance at least ten miles. He believed they had found a good route, "but we have not found the shortest road to Colorado City." He stated that the distance to Denver was about  $607\frac{1}{4}$  miles, "relying upon the correctness of Green Russell's figures for the last eighty miles." He thought the route could probably be shortened twenty miles.

He concluded this account concerning the route thus: "Ours is one hundred miles shorter than either the Platte or the Arkansas route; we have found abundance of water and grass, and wood and fuel more than sufficient for camping purposes. We have found a first rate road, and so far the expedition is a complete success. . . . Total distance to

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8. The Western Mountaineer, August 30, 1860, as recorded in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXII-51a."

Colorado City via Green's Route is 607  $\frac{2}{3}$  miles."<sup>9</sup> A Mr. James Brown, one of the engineers on the expedition, reported the distance as 614 miles from Leavenworth to Denver. He said the greatest stretch without water was twenty-two miles, with the remainder of the route well supplied at three to five mile intervals.<sup>10</sup>

Superintendent Green and the guide, Mr. Fitch, reported that the longest stretch without water was twenty-two miles, however, they stated that the longest distance other than this one long stretch was eight miles. They claimed that the greatest distance without wood was sixty-six miles, but on that stretch there were plenty of buffalo chips. They reported no sand on the entire route. This account gave the total distance to Denver as 605 miles, and to Colorado City as 622 miles.<sup>11</sup>

On the return trip from Denver to Leavenworth, the party stopped at Cheyenne Well and erected sign boards giving the distances to the Sandy Fork of the Arkansas, to Colorado City and Denver; and to Leavenworth. They left Denver on August 31, and arrived at Salina on the 26th of September. A daily account of the return trip is given in

9. This account was written by Tennison, August 15, 1860, near Black Squirrel Creek on the road between Denver and Colorado City. The Western Mountaineer, August 30, 1860, as recorded in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXII-51a."

10. The Western Mountaineer, August 23, 1860, as recorded in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXII-51." Most of this information, with slight discrepancies regarding distances, can be found in: Louise Barry, op. cit., p. 56. In the footnote of this article, there is a discrepancy concerning the number of men included in this party; here the number is given as forty, instead of twenty-nine.

11. Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 29, 1860. This article contains a good, short account of the expedition.



Green's report except for the section between Salina and Leavenworth.

Green states that no daily account was kept on that portion of the trip, since the route lay "over an old and well-known road."<sup>12</sup>

According to the table of distances appended to the report of this expedition, the distance between Leavenworth and Denver is 603 miles. This table of distances which is annotated giving such items of information as the supply of wood, water and grass along the route and the condition of the terrain, follows:

TABLE I. DISTANCES BETWEEN LEAVENWORTH CITY AND DENVER

| Camp   | Distance<br>between Camps | Total<br>Distance |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| From Leavenworth to  |                           |                   |
| Fort Riley, U.S. Military Post--Good camping places along the road, at convenient distances. Road continues excellent to     | 121                       | 121               |
| Salina, Frontier town--The shortest road to this place by 14 miles, lies south of the Kaw river by way of Topeka or Lawrence | 52                        | 159               |
| Elm Creek--Wood and grass; no water in dry seasons   | 3 1/4                     | 162 1/4           |
| Spring Creek--Road follows up this creek 14 miles; good camping places   | 2 3/4                     | 165               |
| Alum Creek--Wood and grass; no water in dry seasons  | 3 1/2                     | 182 1/2           |
| Clear Creek--Wood, water and grass abundant; follow military road; 1 1/2 miles past Chimney Rock turn to the right           | 3 1/2                     | 186               |
| Clay Creek--Wood, Water and grass  | 8                         | 194               |
| Buffalo Creek--Wood, water and grass   | 5 1/2                     | 199 1/2           |
| Lost Creek--Water and grass; wood scarce   | 15                        | 214 1/2           |
| Cow Creek--Water and grass   | 7 1/2                     | 222               |
| Fossil Creek--Water and grass; wood scarce   | 6                         | 228               |
| Big Creek--Wood, water and grass; excellent soil   | 6 3/4                     | 234 3/4           |

12. Report and Map of the Superintendent and Engineer of the Smoky Hill Expedition Together with the Table of Distances, pp. 12-17.

TABLE I. (Continued)

| Camp  | Distance<br>between Camps | Total<br>Distance |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Twin Tree Creek--Water and grass  | 6 1/4                     | 241               |
| Prairie Creek--Water and grass  | 18                        | 259               |
| Brown's Spring--Water and grass   | 10                        | 269               |
| White Bluff Spring--Water and grass   | 12                        | 281               |
| Willow Run or Ox Creek--Water and grass   | 15                        | 296               |
| North Creek--Wood, water and grass  | 8                         | 304               |
| Small Creek--Water and grass abundant; road<br>crosses several small water courses before<br>reaching   | 7                         | 311               |
| Cottonwood Creek--Wood, water and grass   | 15                        | 326               |
| Smoky Hill Valley--Water and grass; driftwood,<br>camping places, with wood, water and grass,<br>on the banks of the Smoky Hill, at convenient<br>distances             | 9                         | 335               |
| South Fork of the Smoky Hill--Wood, water and<br>grass. Leave the old emigrant road and fol-<br>low up the South Fork; good camping places<br>on the banks of the river | 40                        | 375               |
| Little Cottonwood Grove--Wood, water and grass  | 17                        | 392               |
| Goose Creek--Water and grass  | 10                        | 402               |
| .....   |                           |                   |
| Denver City   |                           | 603               |

Note-- . . . It should be borne in mind that such a drought as existed in 1861, was never before known in Kansas. In ordinary seasons there is an abundance of water all through this country.

There is also a peculiarity in the soil, that, in a severe drought, enables it to withstand the absence of rain; the grass presenting a green and healthy appearance, when other soils could yield nothing, and be completely parched. 13

One newspaper, reporting on the results of this survey, saw great prospects for increased settlement along the entire Smoky Hill Route. This paper explains at length the many resources of the Smoky Hill Valley, the greatest of which was its fine soil. This paper predicted that the

13. Ibid., pp. 18-19. A short account of the entire report can be found in: George A. Root, op. cit.

Smoky Hill Route would soon become the most prominent, in fact "the only National road to the West." 14

While most accounts were in favor of the route, some persons still were skeptical. One guide book, noting the Green survey, remarked thus: "Their report that the route was direct and feasible does not appear to have induced many to attempt its passage, though it is confidently expected by those interested that next year it will be a favorite with emigrants and freighters." 15

#### The Route in Disrepute

Although the surveys had proven the Smoky Hill Route to be shorter than any other route, not many people used this road before the latter part of 1864. The scarcity of water that existed near the western end of the trail kept some people from using it; however this was not the only reason.<sup>16</sup> Indian raids were also instrumental in keeping many people

14. Kansas State Record, October 13, 1860. This paper claimed information to the effect that "a span of horses can draw a load of 2,000 pounds over any place on the route." Comment is made on this survey in: Atchison Daily Free Press, May 8, 1865.

15. Charles Collins, S. W. Burt, and E. L. Berthoud, The Rocky Mountain Gold Regions and Emigrants' Guide (Denver City: The Rocky Mountain News Printing Company, 1861), p. 17. This guide gives the distance between Kansas City and Denver by way of the Arkansas Route as 638 miles. Between Leavenworth and Denver by way of the South Platte Route, the distance is listed as 735 miles, or if a toll cut off is taken, the distance can be cut to 675 miles. The toll on the cut off road is given as one dollar. Ibid., pp. 62-65, 99, 111.

16. Many still preferred the Platte Route because they were sure they could find water along that road. LeRoy R. Hafen, The Overland Mail, 1849-1869, Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), p. 283.



from using the newly established road. In 1862, Indians were causing trouble along the western end of the route; this trouble made travelers reluctant to use this road.<sup>17</sup>

The Indians were also making raids along the Kansas sections of the Smoky Hill Trail, and along the Platte Route in 1864. Their raids became so persistent that it was decided to concentrate on alleviating their destruction along the Platte Route and to leave the Smoky Hill Route to its fate, for the time being.<sup>18</sup>

A force of between one hundred and three hundred Indians, attacked a group of seven troopers near Smoky Hill Crossing, between Salina and Fort Ellsworth, on August 16, 1864, killing four of the soldiers.<sup>19</sup> The army had insufficient forces to meet such attacks along the two routes; with no troops to offer them protection along the Smoky Hill Route, the

17. Early in 1862, Cheyennes attacked troopers in attempts to steal horses at Kiowa Creek, Box Elder Creek, and near the head of the Republican and Smoky Hill Forks. Their attacks increased as troops were sent out to pursue them. Randall Parrish, The Great Plains, The Romance of Western American Exploration, Warfare and Settlement, 1527-1870 (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1907), pp. 234-235.

18. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 8, 1865. The Indians ran off the horses of Company H, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, stationed at Smoky Hill Crossing, on August 7, 1864. Dispatch from Sergeant W. H. Struthers to Captain Henry Booth, The War of the Rebellion, A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1893), Series I, XLI, Part I, pp. 233-234.

19. Reports of Major General James G. Blunt, and Lieutenant Jacob Van Antwerp, The War of the Rebellion . . ., Series I, XLI, Part I, pp. 263-264. A few days after this attack, troops who were scouting near the Smoky Hill River Valley from nine miles west of the mouth of Big Creek to Salina had not contacted any Indians, although they had found signs of a recent camp near the mouth of Big Creek, which they thought had been occupied by between 400 and 600 Indians. Report of Captain Henry Booth. Pp. 189-190.

travelers turned to the Platte Route as the safer, though longer, route to the West.

### Start of the Express Business

On July 5, 1864, D. A. Butterfield organized the Butterfield Overland Dispatch from Atchison by way of Topeka and the Smoky Hill River to Denver. He promised to forward all goods consigned to him "cheaply and promptly at more favorable rates" than those of any other firm.<sup>20</sup> This was the beginning of the first truly extensive freighting venture over the Smoky Hill Route.

D. A. Butterfield, not to be confused with John Butterfield of the Overland Mail Company, was not a wealthy individual.<sup>21</sup> This first organization was exclusively a fast freight and express service. He promised quick service between all eastern points and all points in Colorado, Utah and Montana. Officers were placed as contact agents in

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20. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 18, 1864. D. A. Butterfield settled in Kansas in 1856, moved to Denver in 1862, then returned to Kansas in 1864 where he established his freighting business. Ella A. Butterfield, "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XVI-18," in Miss Butterfield's handwriting, dated December 8, 1925. Also: Ella A. Butterfield, "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," The Trail, XVIII (December, 1925), pp. 3-4. One of the first advertisements by the new company appeared in the "Atchison city Directory and Business Mirror for 1865," compiled and published by Matthew Quigg. This gives the time to Denver as eight days, and states that coaches would be run daily after August 1, 1865 "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," Pony Express Courier, II (September, 1935), p. 10.

21. Dorothy Gardiner, West of the River (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1941), pp. 289-290; Hafen, op. cit., p. 282; Captain William Banning and George Hugh Banning, Six Horses (New York: The Century Company, [c 1930/], p. 336.

New York and other major cities in the eastern United States. Butterfield made contracts with shippers to forward goods to any point in the aforementioned territories, and gave a through bill of lading for the same, the contract covered all expenses to the point of destination.<sup>22</sup>

One account states that between July and December, 1864, Butterfield shipped 14,000,000 pounds of freight, mostly to Colorado, and there was over 2,000,000 pounds of freight in storage at Atchison to be shipped in the early spring.<sup>23</sup>

In the spring of 1865, the Butterfield Overland Dispatch was organized into a joint stock company backed by eastern capitalists. The new company had a paid up capital of \$6,000,000. The main company officials were: Chauncey Vibbard, of the New York Central Railroad, President; W. K. Ketchum, President of the Park Bank of New York, Treasurer; and D. A. Butterfield, General Superintendent. At this time a daily mule freight and treasure express was established between Atchison and Denver; the time was to be eight days. Express goods were to travel between New York and Denver in fourteen days.<sup>24</sup>

22. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 10, 1864.

23. Ibid. It is this author's opinion that this freight was not carried over the Smoky Hill Route, but was transported by way of some other route, since no other notice to authenticate this information has come to his attention.

24. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 6, 1865. Some accounts place the capitalization of this company at a much smaller sum than \$6,000,000. G. A. Root gives \$3,000,000 as the figure. George A. Root, op. cit. J. B. Edwards sets the figure at \$1,500,000. J. B. Edwards, "The Butterfield and Holliday Stage Line," Early Days in Abilene, edited and published by C. W. Wheeler, printed in The Abilene Chronicle, 1869, reprinted in The Abilene Daily Chronicle, 1938, with added material from the Papers of J. B. Edwards, p. 15.



On May 9, 1865, the city council of Leavenworth voted \$4,000 to the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Company, "to assist that company in opening up and establishing a line of travel, by way of the Smoky Hill River, to the city of Denver." This money was to be paid to the company when the line was established, with convenient stopping places "thereon."<sup>25</sup>

The Leavenworth Times pointed out to the people of Leavenworth that the city would prosper if this plan were successful, but would suffer if the plan should fail. This paper quoted Butterfield as requesting protection, in the form of military escorts, to guard his stations and the lives and property sent over the line. If this protection were given, he stated that his company would not only establish such a line in sixty days, but would "have daily coaches and express trains running through to, and back from, Denver."<sup>26</sup>

The company began buying mules to stock the road, and hoped to have the line in full operation by July 1, 1865. The intention was to have each wagon haul one ton of freight, and to change teams every fifteen miles on the route. The time between Atchison and Denver was to be eight days.<sup>27</sup>

25. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 22, 1865. This article notes that the citizens of Leavenworth had appropriated a like sum to help pay the expenses of the H. T. Green survey in 1860.

26. Ibid.

27. Atchison Daily Free Press, May 13, 1865. This account notes that "the heavy Express Companies, (the United States, American and Adams,) are all large stockholders in the enterprise," thus it was felt that fast, sufficient service would be assured to all who patronized the Butterfield Express.

During the summer of 1865, the company made preparations to open a passenger line. A large survey group, escorted by military troops, began the task of establishing the new line.

### The Fitch Survey of 1865

One June 13, 1865, Lieutenant Julian R. Fitch of the Signal Corps left Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to accompany the Butterfield surveying party.<sup>28</sup> He employed Charles H. Fitch as first assistant, and Daniel Clark as scout and second assistant, since his orders authorized him to do so. Abner Coleman and Joseph Cornell of the United States Signal Corps were detailed to accompany him, thus there were five in the party when it left the fort.

When these five men arrived at Leavenworth City, they were joined by the construction detail under the charge of Isaac E. Eaton. The group left by way of the Fort Riley military road, and arrived at Fort Riley, 116 miles west of Fort Leavenworth, on June 23, having been hampered by floods and high water. The detail camped at Fort Riley to await their military escort.<sup>29</sup>

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28. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 6, 1865. Lieutenant Fitch had been a member of the H. T. Green survey party in 1860, so this was not his first time over this route. Atchison Daily Free Press, May 25, 1865.

29. The information concerning this survey, as presented in this thesis, is taken from two reports, unless designated otherwise: Eugene F. Ware, The Indian War of 1864 (Topeka, Kansas: Crane and Co., 1911), pp. 583-592; The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 6, 1865. The report can also be found in: Mrs. Frank C. Montgomery, "Fort Wallace and Its Relation to the Frontier," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1926-1928, XVII (Topeka, Kansas, 1928), pp. 190-194.

After being joined by a large military escort under Major Jesse Pritchard and Captain James B. Pond, the group left Fort Riley on July 6, taking the Fort Larned road.<sup>30</sup> Thirty-five miles distant they crossed the Solomon Fork, which Lieutenant Fitch believed would require a bridge that would cost about \$6,000, if made of wood; but considerably more if made with stone piers, as stone was scarce in the vicinity.

Lieutenant Fitch thought that a similar bridge had to be constructed over the Saline Fork. He praised the land in the vicinity of these two streams for the heavy timber and the thickness of the soil.

Thirty-two miles beyond Salina, the group reached Fort Ellsworth. Here they were joined by additional troops under Captains McMichael and Snell. The detail rested for a day at Fort Ellsworth, and while there killed a few buffalo, which they had begun to find in "considerable numbers."<sup>31</sup> Leaving the fort on July 14, they headed west along the Smoky Hill River, over land well supplied with wood, water and grass, everything necessary to make a good wagon road. The party, after

30. There seem to be conflicting accounts concerning the number of troops that accompanied this expedition. Hafen gives the number as 250 men under Major Pritchard: Hafen, *op. cit.*, p. 283. Major Pritchard mentions four companies of cavalry: Jesse L. Pritchard, "To Pike's Peak in Search of Gold in 1859," *The Trail*, IV (September, 1911), p. 15. Pritchard states that there were "about fifty wagons, six mules to each, and when extended in column of twos, with the front and rear guard, covered about two miles." Actually, according to Lieutenant Fitch's report, both of these accounts are correct; but only if the reports concern the expedition after it had left the vicinity of Fort Ellsworth. When the group left Fort Riley, it was escorted only by two companies of cavalry.

31. Lieutenant Fitch states that the old trail of 1860 was entirely obliterated by the time of the 1865 survey. He estimated the buffalo, at a distance five miles west of Fort Ellsworth, to be in the millions, "greater than all the domestic cattle in America."



leaving Fort Ellsworth, consisted of: Colonel Eaton and twenty-six construction men, with eleven four-mule wagons, loaded with tools, reapers and everything that might be needed to make a suitable road; Major Pritchard with 250 cavalry as escort; and the Engineer Corps, plus Mrs. Fitch and Mrs. West, the wife of Captain West.

Coal was reported at a distance of thirty-four miles from Fort Ellsworth. They named this stream, along whose bank the coal was found, Coal Creek. Twelve miles farther west, they came to Big Creek. Here they erected a large mound and stake for a home and cattle station.<sup>32</sup> The detail rested at Big Creek for two days; while in the vicinity, a party under Lieutenant Bell discovered another vein of coal on the south side of the Smoky Hill.

They left Big Creek on July 18 and traveled west, close to the bank of the Smoky Hill. Twenty-eight miles west of Big Creek, they found a large spring, "one of the largest in the West."<sup>33</sup> They continued their route along the river for about fifteen miles, then traveled for twelve and a half miles more at a distance of about three miles from the river. Here they camped, calling the place Downer Station. Nine miles farther west they came to a large basin of springs. They called this area Ruthton. Continuing another nine and one-fourth miles west, they crossed Rock Castle Creek. They now followed along

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32. The constructionists were building mounds and driving stakes with the number of the station on them, at the most favorable sites along the route. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 1, 1865.

33. The river was very high at this time because of heavy rains. Fitch says that it "would have floated a large steamboat."



the bench of the Smoky Hill, and fifty miles west of Rock Castle Creek, they found the "largest spring on the route," situated on Oglallah Creek.

Eight miles farther, they crossed the north fork of the Smoky Hill and kept along the south fork.<sup>34</sup> Twenty-eight miles from the forks, they encountered a stretch of bottom land reaching to within two and one half miles of Big Cottonwood Grove. This bottom was covered with grass six feet high, and contained some fine springs. They called this spot the Meadows, and left a reaper in the grass.

They camped at Big Cottonwood Grove.<sup>35</sup> Sixteen and a half miles west of the grove, they came to Cheyenne Well; here they changed direction to the southwest and headed for the Sandy branch of the Arkansas River.<sup>36</sup> Eleven miles from Cheyenne Well, they erected a mound for a well to be dug, and twenty-one miles from Cheyenne Well they reached the Sandy. They now followed the Sandy northwest for a distance of seventy miles, finding sufficient water and grass but a scarcity of timber.

They left the Sandy at its northern bend and headed northwest. After crossing Beaver, Bijou and Kiowa Creeks, and other streams, they

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34. Lieutenant Fitch blames the difficulties experienced by emigrants in the early years of the trail on the fact that they followed the north fork across an eighty-five mile stretch without water, instead of following the south fork which had ample water.

35. Fitch notes that this grove used to be a favorite camping-ground for Indians.

36. Cheyenne Well was dug by the survey party in 1860. Lieutenant Fitch, it will be recalled, was a member of that party.

struck the old Taos road at Cherry Creek, nine miles from Denver. They followed this road into Denver, arriving at that place on August 7, 1865.<sup>37</sup> It had taken them twenty-four days, six of which they rested, to travel from Fort Ellsworth to Denver. They lost only one mule, and one pony on the trip.

In his report, Lieutenant Fitch set forth what he considered the advantages of this new route over all other routes between Leavenworth and Denver. He believed that it was 116 miles shorter than any other route, and that the terrain over which this route lay presented less obstacles than the Platte or Arkansas River routes. Wood, water and grass were in good supply along the entire route according to his report. He also noted that there were no signs of Indians along the route; this he contributed to the fact that both the Platte and Arkansas routes were heavily garrisoned with troops and the Indians would not care to be surrounded by the troops. He further stated that the government would protect this new route. Lieutenant Fitch returned to Leavenworth by way of the Platte Route; so he claimed he could rightly judge the merits of the two routes.<sup>38</sup>

Isaac E. Eaton, who was in charge of the construction detail on this expedition, compiled reports from various places along the route. On July 13, 1865, he wrote to Butterfield from Ellsworth

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37. This date is given in: Hafen, op. cit., p. 283.

38. This is the last of the information taken from the sources listed in footnote #28. Succeeding material will be found in the sources cited in the footnotes.

Station, which he said was 19 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles west of Fort Leavenworth. He advised Butterfield to have his mules and coaches ready "to string along the route by September," since the success of the route was assured.<sup>39</sup>

Eaton gave a very favorable report to the editors of the Rocky Mountain News, extolling the advantages of the route as compared with the Platte Route. He reported that cattle stations had been established every sixty or seventy miles along the route, where changes in the ox teams could be made; and that stations could be built every ten or fifteen miles along the route, the work to commence on them within the next five days.<sup>40</sup>

In a letter to Thomas Carney, mayor of Leavenworth, Eaton reported on the stations established along the route, and the progress of the building and stocking of those stations. He also stated that all the streams and ravines were being bridged to make the route the best road between the Missouri River and Denver. He claimed the route was "one hundred per cent superior to either the Platte or Arkansas routes in every respect."<sup>41</sup>

39. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 1, 1865; Atchison Daily Free Press, July 22, 1865.

40. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 8, 1865. Eaton stated that he would stock the stations at the western end of the route with the forty head of mules he had brought along for that purpose, the other stations would be stocked as fast as possible. See also: Atchison Daily Free Press, August 16, 1865.

41. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 28, 1865. Eaton was Assistant Superintendent of the Overland Dispatch at this time. See also: The Junction City Union, September 30, 1865.



### The Line in Operation

The first train to take the new route left Atchison on June 24, 1865, loaded with 160,000 pounds of freight. This train reached Salina on July 7, having encountered no trouble along the way.<sup>42</sup>

Near the end of July, one paper noted that the stocking of the line should be complete within a few weeks; then express coaches would leave daily for the mountains.<sup>43</sup>

A certain J. R. Whitehead contracted with Butterfield to ship 100,000 pounds of freight to Central City. Of this freight 30,000 pounds were loaded on July 22.<sup>44</sup>

Frank A. Root records that a train left Atchison on July 15, with seventeen large steam boilers. A short time later another train left for Virginia City, Montana, with 150,000 pounds of machinery, freight charges on this shipment were twenty-two and one-half cents a pound.<sup>45</sup>

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42. Atchison Daily Free Press, July 11, 1865. This account stated that the train should reach Denver ten days sooner than any wagon which left the Missouri River on the same date and went by the Platte Route. Mention of this train is given in: Frank A. Root and William Elsey Connelley, The Overland Stage to California (Topeka, Kansas, 1901), pp. 398-399. Frank A. Root gives the amount of freight as 150,000 pounds. J. B. Edwards, op. cit., p. 15, also refers to this train, giving the date as June 25, 1865, and the amount of freight as 150,000 pounds.

43. Atchison Daily Free Press, July 24, 1865.

44. Atchison Champion, July 23, 1865, as quoted in: The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 1, 1865.

45. Root and Connelley, op. cit., p. 399.

On August 2, 1865, the Butterfield Overland Dispatch received 175,000 pounds of freight, and on August 3, 1865, an additional 177,000 pounds were received. At this time the company was loading 600,000 pounds of merchandise, to go by mule trains to Salt Lake merchants. Much business, which formerly had been going to Nebraska City, was now being re-shipped to Atchison to be taken west by the Butterfield Dispatch. Nearly 300,000 pounds of freight were transferred to Atchison about this time. The Atchison papers were commenting in very favorable terms on the company's operations.<sup>46</sup>

Advertisements concerning the services offered by the company began to appear frequently in the various papers in the late summer of 1865. One of these read as follows:

By telegram of August 16th, from D. A. Butterfield, General Superintendent of "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," I am instructed to give notice that the company are prepared to receive goods at Atchison and Leavenworth, for transportation by fast express to all points in Colorado. Express coaches will leave Atchison and Leavenworth Daily, after September 1st, 1865.

Wm. Morrow, Ag't B.O.D. <sup>47</sup>

The military escort, which had accompanied the Fitch survey party, left Denver on August 20, 1865, under the command of Captain Schnell: Major Pritchard having received orders to return east by coach.<sup>48</sup> The construction detail, under Eaton, had left Denver on August 16, and began building the station houses along the route.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup>. Atchison Daily Free Press, August 5, 1865.

<sup>47</sup>. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 21, 1865.

<sup>48</sup>. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 21, 1865.

<sup>49</sup>. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 17, 1865.

A train of fifty mule-drawn wagons left Leavenworth on August 14, 1865, and was expected to reach Denver within twenty days.<sup>50</sup> One account stated that there were 1500 mules in use on the route by the early part of September, 1865; it noted also "there is very little doubt that coaches will be running by the middle of September."<sup>51</sup>

On October 5, a train of thirty ox-wagons, belonging to a Mr. Johnson, left Denver taking the Smoky Hill Route on its return voyage to the East.<sup>52</sup> The following month M. M. Delano advertised for a means of transportation to carry 50,000 feet of lumber from his mills on Running Creek in Colorado to stations along the Smoky Hill Route, "a distance of 150 to 250 miles from Denver." He advised any person having a train going East that it would be worth their while to load with this lumber.<sup>53</sup>

With his express business coming along very well, Butterfield began competing with the stage companies on the Platte River Route by sending out passenger stages over the Smoky Hill Road in September, 1865. The first coach left Atchison for Denver on the morning of September 11 and was expected to reach Denver on September 21. On the

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50. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 17, 1865. Another large train left Atchison for Denver on August 15. An account reports that construction on the stations between Atchison and Fort Riley was advancing favorably; while construction was being carried on eastward from Denver. The Atchison Champion, August 17, 1865, as quoted in: The Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 24, 1865.

51. Atchison Daily Free Press, September 4, 1865.

52. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 6, 1865.

53. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 4, 1865.



return trip, the coach was to carry ten passengers at a fare of \$100 each. The editor of the Denver paper thought that this was a "living price for all concerned."<sup>54</sup>

This first coach arrived in Denver on September 23 and was met by a large number of people who wished to greet Butterfield and extend their best wishes to him. The reception committee met the coach about four miles from downtown Denver and escorted Butterfield, who had been transferred into another carriage with the mayor and other first citizens of Denver, to the Planter House. The band was playing and banners with glowing tributes to the prowess of Butterfield were carried in the parade.

A light lunch was then served to Butterfield, and many friends warmly congratulated him on the opening of his new route. He then appeared before the crowd which had gathered in front of the hotel; and after short introductory remarks by the Honorable J. M. Cavanaugh, the crowd gave him a huge welcome. He thanked the people for the fine way in which they had received him, and said that he had confidence in the people to keep this route operating successfully. He noted that the route was entirely successful, stating that he had covered the distance "from Fort Ellsworth, 380 miles, without a change of stock, in seven days."

Butterfield told the people that he would shortly contract to carry freight to Denver from New York in eleven days. He said "that

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54. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 11, 1865.

all the great heads of the railroad interest in the east were now looking to this route for the great Pacific trunk, and that, as sure as anything in the future could be, the Smoky Hill Route would be the route for that line."<sup>55</sup>

The business and public men of Denver held a banquet in honor of Colonel D. A. Butterfield at the People's Restaurant on the evening of September 23. Again many congratulated him on the success of his new endeavor, and in return he promised to fulfil all their expectations concerning his business.<sup>56</sup>

Three Passengers who made the trip to Denver in the first stage were newspaper men; they were investigating the reports on gold. Henry Villard of the Cincinnati Commercial, a man named Richardson of the Boston Journal, and a representative of the New York Tribune were these three men.<sup>57</sup>

One account states that Butterfield did not expect to make the first trip on schedule time, since he was delayed along the route in establishing stations. Since the route was now operating, coaches

55. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 23, 1865. This account is quoted in: Atchison Daily Free Press, September 29, 1865. See also: Ella A. Butterfield, "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," The Trail, XVIII (December, 1925), pp. 6-7; Ella A. Butterfield, "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XVI-18," in Miss Butterfield's handwriting, dated December 8, 1925; Albert B. Sanford, "Mountain Staging in Colorado," The Colorado Magazine, IX (March, 1932), p. 67; Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1889), I, pp. 409-410. Hall gives the Denver mayor's name as George T. Clark.

56. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 25, 1865.

57. Topeka Journal, September 5, 1914, as found in: Kansas State Historical Society's Trails Clippings, II, p. 36.

were to leave both Atchison and Denver daily, and the schedule time was to be eight days. It was further stated that nearly every coach leaving Atchison at this time was filled with passengers and express, and that arrangements were to be perfected to make this "the route over the plains."<sup>58</sup>

At a complimentary supper to General Dodge, Colonel Butterfield, replying to a toast to "D. A. Butterfield and the Smoky Hill Route," gave credit for the opening of the new route to Major-General Dodge, for his aid in furnishing troops and by helping "the enterprise in all possible ways."<sup>59</sup>

Butterfield left Denver for Atchison on October 6 to complete arrangements for his growing business. He was greatly pleased with the way the people of Colorado were favoring his company.<sup>60</sup>

Although Butterfield's company was doing a large business in September, 1865, with hardly any trouble to hinder its advances, it was only a short time until numerous circumstances destroyed the efficiency and disrupted the services on the Smoky Hill Route.

#### The Express Stations and the Military Posts

The stations, as located by the Fitch and Eaton survey expedition of 1865, were on the average about fifteen miles apart. Between

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58. Atchison Daily Free Press, September 25, 1865.

59. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 27, 1865.

60. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 6, 1865.



Junction City and Denver they selected a total of thirty-seven station sites; fifteen of these were designated as home stations, with four being specified as home and cattle stations. At the home stations, which were to be operated by a family living on the premises, passengers would be able to obtain meals; while at the cattle stations, the trains would be able to change their cattle and drivers.

The cattle stations were located where a ready supply of hay could be procured. Eaton claimed that the supply of hay was unlimited at those spots which they had designated as such stations. He further stated that fish "sufficient to supply all the demands of the stations" could be found in the springs and pools near the stations. Water was available in the springs along the route; thus the route possessed all the necessary resources to make it far superior than either the Platte or Arkansas routes.<sup>61</sup>

The table of distances on the Smoky Hill Route, with the stations from Leavenworth to Fitch's Meadows, is on the following page. Those stations designated by one star are home stations, and those by two stars are home and cattle stations.

The first stations were constructed of yellow pine lumber, one and a half stories high, thirty-two by sixteen feet, with a kitchen attached, eighteen by twenty feet. Stables were constructed of the same material. The lumber for the stations was cut near the Parkhurst

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61. Report from Issac E. Eaton to Mayor Thomas Carney of Leavenworth City, Kansas. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 28, 1865; The Junction City Union, September 30, 1865.

station and shipped down the Smoky Hill Route by returning freight trains of the Butterfield Company.<sup>62</sup>

TABLE II. DISTANCES BETWEEN LEAVENWORTH AND FITCH'S MEADOWS

| Stations         | Distance<br>Between | Stations (continued) | Distance<br>Between |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Leavenworth      |                     | Dowmer Station       | 14                  |
| *Junction City   | 118                 | **Ruthton            | 10                  |
| Herseys          | 16                  | Blufton              | 11                  |
| *Solomon River   | 17                  | *Bridgens Raisin     | 18                  |
| *Salina          | 16                  | Grannell Spring      | 12                  |
| Spring Creek     | 15                  | Chalk Bluffs         | 13                  |
| *Ellsworth       | 14                  | *Monuments           | 14                  |
| Buffalo Creek    | 14                  | Four Crossings       | 12                  |
| *Lost Creek      | 15                  | **Eaton              | 11                  |
| Fossil Creek     | 14                  | Henshaw's Springs    | 13                  |
| *Forks Big Creek | 14                  | *Pond's Creek        | 11                  |
|                  |                     | *Fitch's Meadows     | 14                  |

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The distances given by Eaton in this report check exactly with the table of distances that can be found on the "Map of the Military District, Kansas and the Territories . . . 1866 . . ." <sup>64</sup>

Another map entitled "Map showing Wagon Roads from Ft. Harker to Pond Creek . . . [1867]" shows the stations between the two named points and includes a table of distances between the major military posts. On this map there are a few stations with names that disagree slightly, in the way in which they are spelled, with those given in the

62. Ibid. Parkhurst station was 28 miles east of Denver.

63. Ibid.

64. United States War Department, Engineer Department, Military District of Kansas and the Territories, "Map of the Military District Kansas and the Territories," (National Archives), 1866.

Eaton report; however, all but one of the distances that are shown, agree favorably with the distances of the Eaton report.<sup>65</sup>

An account of a trip between Ellsworth and Denver in October, 1865, gives certain stations along the route, some of which agree with those named in Eaton's report and others which disagree. Leaving Ellsworth on October 7, according to this report, they then passed Buffalo Creek and Lost Creek, arriving at Big Creek early on the morning of October 8. At Big Creek, a company of Illinois cavalry was constructing a log fort which was to be known as Fort Fletcher.<sup>66</sup>

Leaving Big Creek, the group reached Ruthton on October 9. The next station mentioned is Bluffton, followed by Dowling Springs. From Dowling Springs, they journeyed to the mouth of Cottonwood, at which place a company of the 13th Missouri was stationed. Fifteen miles from Cottonwood, they came to Monument Station, and at this location a detachment of the 13th Missouri was on duty. After Monument, the next station given is Smoky Hill Springs, where troops were also stationed. The remaining stations in Kansas that are given in this account are Eaton Springs, Henshaw Springs and Pond Creek. At Pond Creek a large frame building was being constructed and good meals

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65. The distances given on this map were furnished by a Captain West, probably the man who accompanied Lieutenant Fitch on the 1865 survey. United States War Department, Engineer Department, "Map showing Wagon roads from Ft. Harker to Pond Creek . . ." (National Archives), 1867.

66. Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 21, 1865, an article signed "Anchor." This account concerning the construction of Fort Fletcher agrees with the data given by Garfield: Marvin H. Garfield, "The Military Post as a Factor in the Frontier Defense of Kansas, 1865-1865," Kansas Historical Quarterly, I (February, 1931), p. 56.



could be purchased. The bill of fare is given as consisting of "buffalo and venison steaks, coffee, tea, hot rolls, can fruits and cakes."<sup>67</sup>

The passenger who made the report remarked that the coaches in use at that time were too heavy for staging, but the company was substituting Concord Coaches for the Express wagons and horses for the mules; these two changes would improve the travel considerably. He thought that the new route would prove a success.<sup>68</sup>

The main military posts between Ellsworth and the western border of Kansas were four in number. Fort Ellsworth was built in 1864, thirty-six miles west of Salina and near the present town of Ellsworth.<sup>69</sup> The name of this fort was changed to Fort Harker on November 20, 1866.<sup>70</sup> Bell described this post as a well constructed, three-company post, with large storehouses filled with war supplies, but in no sense was

67. Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 21, 1865. It appears that the route must not have been well stocked with mules at the various stations, as the person giving this account continually notes that their mules were exhausted, but that there was no stock at the stations to replace them. With the tired mules they left Pond Creek on October 13, and arrived at Cheyenne Springs, Colorado, the afternoon of October 14.

68. Ibid. This account states that troops were stationed at all "exposed posts" on the route.

69. Garfield, op. cit., p. 55. By the table of distances on "Map of the Military District, Kansas and the Territories . . . 1866," the distance between Ellsworth town and the fort is given as 5.205 miles. One account states that Fort Harker (formerly Fort Ellsworth) was three miles from Ellsworth town. This person visited the area in 1868. DeB. Randolph Keim, Sheridan's Troopers On the Borders, A Winter Campaign on the Plains (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Huffelfinger, 1870), p. 14.

70. "Fort Hays, Kansas, Special Order Book, October 15, 1866--May 26, 1868" (National Archives), General Order No. 2, November 20, 1866.

it worthy of the term fort.<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Custer refers to it as "a forlorn little post--a few log houses bare of comfort, and no trees to cast a shade on the low roofs."<sup>72</sup> This fort was abandoned by the government in 1873.<sup>73</sup>

The first major post west of Fort Ellsworth was Camp Fletcher, which was established in October, 1865. One source locates it at a distance of fifty-seven miles from Ellsworth.<sup>74</sup> The name of this post was changed to Fort Hays in November, 1866.<sup>75</sup> The location of the post was changed in June, 1867.<sup>76</sup> The new site was about one-half mile southwest of the present day Hays, Ellis County, Kansas. Keim described this post as being located in "a most desirable place" for anyone who had to do duty on the plains. His description continues:

The quarters consisted of a row of eight double frame houses, one and three-fourths stories high, neatly furnished and painted both within and without, and had a decided appearance of comfort. These quarters fronted on one face of the parade, while the other three sides were enclosed by the frame barracks

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71. William A. Bell, New Tracks in North America (London: Chapman and Hall, 1869), I, pp. 27-28.

72. Elizabeth B. Custer, Tenting on the Plains, or General Custer in Kansas and Texas (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, /c 1887/), p. 340.

73. Garfield, op. cit., p. 56.

74. United States War Department, Engineer Department, Military District of Kansas and the Territories, "Map of the Military District Kansas and the Territories" (National Archives), 1866. This distance coincides with the total distance between Ellsworth and Forks Big Creek as reported by Eaton in his account of the 1865 survey. Refer to Table on page 37.

75. Garfield, op. cit., p. 56.

76. "Fort Hays, Kansas, Special Order Book," Post Order No. 1, June 23, 1867.

for the troops. The hospital, quartermaster's and commissary's buildings, and the corral, occupied positions apart from the fort proper. On the left were sheds with accommodations for the horses of a cavalry squadron. The country, however, in the vicinity of the fort was perfectly uninviting, . . . and not a tree in sight, excepting a few scattered specimens on the banks of Big Creek.<sup>77</sup>

Mrs. Custer speaks of Fort Hays as: "another small post of log huts, . . . treeless and desolate, but the stream beyond was lined with white canvas."<sup>78</sup>

Fort Hays was abandoned in 1889.<sup>79</sup>

Ninety-two miles west of Fort Fletcher was Fort Monument, which was garrisoned with troops in 1865.<sup>80</sup> One account suggests that this post consisted of "a stone building about 75 x 100 feet and a walled parade ground of perhaps an acre . . . . The stables, corrals, blacksmith shop, commissary, and the houses were south of the main fort building and along the bank of the river."<sup>81</sup> Carver believed he had found an underground tunnel to the river which could have been used

77. Keim, op. cit., p. 22. He was describing the post as it appeared in 1868.

78. E. B. Custer, op. cit., p. 342. This author surmises that Mrs. Custer is describing the post as it appeared before the location was changed in 1867.

79. Garfield, op. cit., p. 56.

80. The information concerning the troops is given in Garfield, op. cit., pp. 57-58. The distance comes from: United States War Department, Engineer Department, Military District of Kansas and the Territories, "Map of the Military District Kansas and the Territories" (National Archives), 1866.

81. Oakley Graphic, March 13, 1936, as found in: Kansas State Historical Society's Trails Clippings, III, pp. 220-221. Dean Carver and Z. Phelps located the stage stations in Logan and Wallace counties.



to get water in case of siege by the Indians.<sup>82</sup> This post was abandoned by the Army in 1868.<sup>83</sup>

The last major post in Western Kansas was established at Camp Pond Creek in September, 1865.<sup>84</sup> This post was located forty-seven miles west of Fort Monument.<sup>85</sup> The name was changed to Fort Wallace in September, 1866.<sup>86</sup> The post was abandoned around June, 1882.<sup>87</sup> William Bell wrote concerning the station at Pond Creek as follows:

Standing side by side, and built of wood and stone, are the stables and the ranch in which the drivers and the ostlers live. Behind is a corralle, a yard, divided off from the plain by a wall of stones. In this is kept the hay, &c, belonging to the station. A little subterranean passage, about five feet by three, leads from the stables to the house. Another one leads from the stable to a pit dug in the ground, about ten yards distant. This pit is about eight or ten feet square, is roofed with stone supported on wood, and just on a level with the ground portholes open on all sides. The roof is raised but little above the general level of the ground; more, however, at this station than at most of them. Another narrow subterranean passage leads from the house to a second pit, commanding the other side of the station; while a third passage runs from the corralle to a larger pit commanding the rear. In both houses, many repeating Spencer and Henry breech-loading rifles--the former carrying seven, and the latter eighteen charges--lie loaded and ready to hand; while over each little fort a black flag waves, which the red-men

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82. Ibid., p. 221.

83. Garfield, op. cit., p. 57.

84. Ibid., p. 56.

85. United States War Department, Engineer Department, Military District of Kansas and the Territories, "Map of the Military District Kansas and the Territories" (National Archives), 1866.

86. Mrs. Montgomery, op. cit., p. 199.

87. Ibid., p. 280. For a detailed history of Fort Wallace read Mrs. Montgomery's article.

know well means "no quarter" for them. When attacked, the men creep into these pits, and, thus protected, keep up a tremendous fire through the portholes. Two or three men, with a couple of breech-loaders each, are a match for almost any number of assailants. . . . The Indians are beginning to understand these covered rifle-pits, and the more they know of them the more careful they are to keep at a respectful distance from them.<sup>88</sup>

Besides these major military posts, troops were stationed at other stations along the route during times of Indian troubles.

Some of the station sites and names were changed after the route was first established in 1865. The following Table gives the stations as they were permanently located. Those stations designated by stars were home or eating stations.

TABLE III. DISTANCES BETWEEN LEAVENWORTH AND WILLOW CREEK

| Stations        | Miles | Stations(continued) | Miles |
|-----------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| Leavenworth     |       | *Big Creek          | 11    |
| Fort Riley      | 116   | Louisa Springs      | 12    |
| *Junction City  | 3     | Bluffton            | 14    |
| Chapman's Creek | 12    | *Downer             | 13    |
| *Abilene        | 12    | Castle Rock Creek   | 9     |
| Solomon River   | 10    | Grannell Spring     | 11    |
| *Salina         | 13    | Chalk Bluffs        | 12    |
| Spring Creek    | 15    | *Monuments          | 13    |
| *Ellsworth      | 14    | Smoky Hill Spring   | 11    |
| Buffalo Creek   | 12    | *Eaton              | 12    |
| *Hick's Station | 15    | Henshaw Spring      | 13    |
| Fossil Creek    | 15    | *Pond's Creek       | 11    |
| Forsyth's Creek | 11    | Willow Creek        | 14    |

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88. Bell, op. cit., p. 65.

89. The Junction City Union, December 2, 1865. The names of the stations can also be found in: Ella A. Butterfield, "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XVI-18," In Miss Butterfield's handwriting, dated December 8, 1925. See also: Root and Connelley, op. cit., p. 398.

### End of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch

On October 2, 1865, the first attack on a Butterfield Overland Dispatch coach was made near Monument Station. The east-bound coach had traveled nearly 250 miles on its journey from Denver to Atchison at the time of the attack. The attacking force consisted of about thirty Indians, who plundered and burned the coach after the passengers, who had fought for some time before abandoning it, finally decided to take the horses and start for Atchison. Forty miles east of the place of the attack, the escapees met another coach which was carrying an agent of the line. The whole party returned to Atchison, the agent taking the stock off the road as they withdrew.<sup>90</sup>

The attackers burned the station house and drove off some mules at Monument. During this action, one passenger received a bullet hole in his coat but was not harmed. The foray must not have caused too much worry, as far as company officials were concerned, for the regular coach left Atchison for Denver on the morning of October 9; nevertheless, many persons awaited further news before leaving for Denver.<sup>91</sup>

Butterfield arrived at Atchison from Denver on October 19, and reported no trouble from Indians along the route. He stated that "five companies" were guarding the road.<sup>92</sup>

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90. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 16, 1865, quoting from the Atchison Champion. Samuel Cushman, who had written to the editors of the Daily Rocky Mountain News concerning this attack, thought that no more coaches would pass over the Smoky Hill Route that winter.

91. Atchison Daily Free Press, October 9, 1865.

92. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 19, 1865.



One day after Butterfield arrived at Atchison, a Mr. Clarke arrived at Denver by the Smoky Hill Route and he also noted the absence of any trouble on the way. He stated a belief that the early October raid on the stage line was the work of "white men in disguise, whose sole object was plunder," as they showed no signs of causing harm to anyone but only wanted to scare the party into running away so they could secure their property.<sup>93</sup>

Other groups made uneventful trips over the route in the weeks following the first attack. On October 24, a group of soldiers arrived at Fort Leavenworth with about three hundred animals having made the trip from Denver in about twenty days. They reported no Indians on the route and no signs of any, "except at Monument where the coach was burned." They stated that troops were stationed at Big Creek, Monument, and Pond Creek to keep the route open and free of Indian attacks; and noted that Colonel Butterfield had already replaced the stock that had been taken by the attackers.<sup>94</sup>

About three weeks later seven soldiers arrived at Denver after traveling the Smoky Hill Route, and reported no Indians, or signs of any, on the way.<sup>95</sup>

In an attempt to solve the Indian problem, General Grant issued new statements on Indian policy. One account summarizes this new

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93. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 21, 1865.

94. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 6, 1865.

95. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 15, 1865.

policy as follows:

He (Grant) has already issued full instructions to Major Generals Sherman and Pope, directing them to give their particular attention to this subject, and take without delay the necessary steps to put an end, at the earliest possible moment, to the Indian troubles and the insecurity of the three great highways of overland travel—the Platte, Smoky Hill and Arkansas routes. Numerous fortified posts will be established along them with regular garrisons, as well as with moveable detachments for the constant patrolling of the roads and the quick pursuit of depredators, white or redskinned, upon the persons and property of settlers and traders. The execution of the late barbarous orders of Gen. Connor and other blood thirsty Indian Fighters, that would have involved the Government in a costly war for years, will be stayed, and a system of treatment of the Indians more in accordance with justice and humanity, established. The volunteers now serving on the plains will be replaced by four thousand colored troops, whose freedom from the prejudices of the whites toward the Indians well qualifies them for carrying out this new policy. Most of these measures are due to the intelligent, earnest representations of Lieut. Col. Tappan, of the 1st Colorado volunteer cavalry, who has lately devoted himself most zealously to the advocacy before the proper authorities of the claims of the people of the Far West to protection, and of the more humane and judicious policy toward the Indians.<sup>96</sup>

It wasn't very long before new attacks began. On November 17 a special stage left Atchison for a trip over the Smoky Hill Route to Denver. Aboard this stage were General Brewster, Vice President of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Company; Theodore R. Davis, special artist for Harper's Weekly; and two others, a Mr. Lawrence Hasbrouck of Kingston, New York; and a Mr. Calhoun of Atchison. The purpose of the trip as far as General Brewster was concerned, was to make the most suitable arrangements along the route for the convenience and well being of the company's passengers. New equipment and animals were being placed on the route to bring about the desired results.

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96. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 3, 1865.

The journey was made without any trouble to Ruthton Station. The party left Ruthton toward evening on November 19, when they were near the next station, Bluffton, they were met by a party of five men who informed them of Indian attacks upon Downer Station. This information induced the party to turn back to Ruthton where a Butterfield Overland Dispatch train was parked; here they believed they could defend themselves better, if attacked.

On the trip back to Ruthton, the recent additions to the party told of their experiences. A Mr. Perrin, the spokesman for the group, related the tale. He had left Atchison on November 15 in a stage with a Butterfield Overland Dispatch messenger Fred Merwin. The ride was slow, so the two men got out and walked at times, being able to keep up with the stage. They arrived at Downer Station and were about to get a change of stock when Indians charged in among them. They hurriedly sought refuge in the stock-herders' quarters at the station.

The defenders had eight men in all in their party: Mr. Perrin, Mr. Merwin, three carpenters, two stock-tenders, and a negro blacksmith. They took up positions as best possible and began firing on the attackers. After a short time, one of the attackers shouted to them in good English and professed friendship.

This spokesman for the Indians was the half-breed son of Colonel Bill Bent who tried to explain the reason for the attack. He explained that the attackers had mistakenly believed that the stock was the property of the Pawnees and Pottawatomies, who were reportedly hunting in the area. He said that the Indians with him were Cheyennes,



and were desirous of peace. At this juncture, the defenders left their place of refuge and came to the Indians who shook hands with them. The Indians then began to gather the stock, and told the party they could proceed, however another group began firing upon the men, at which time the "friendly" Indians ran off to the shelter of the bank from whence the fire originated.

Mr. Merwin was killed, as was one of the stock tenders. The other stock tender was taken prisoner. The other members of the party sought refuge behind a bluff nearby. The Indians followed in quick pursuit but harmed none of them. The five men realized that they could not hope to escape from mounted Indians, so they sought the protection of a buffalo wallow from which position they began firing upon the circling Indians.

The negro was believed to have killed one Indian and wounded another; nevertheless, he too was wounded, being struck on his head with a bullet which glanced off "as if it had struck a stone."

Night came and the Indians withdrew; Mr. Perrin and his party did likewise. When they reached Bluffton, they discovered that it had been burned, so decided to try to reach Ruthton. It was on the way to the latter place that they met Brewster's stage.<sup>97</sup>

When the stage carrying Brewster reached Ruthton, he at once sent a messenger to Colonel Tamblin, commanding the forces at Big

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97. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865. See also: Atchison Daily Free Press, November 30, 1865; Howard C. Raynesford, "The Smoky Hill Trail," a talk given before the Rotarians of Ellis, Kansas, January 23, 1935, in Kansas State Historical Society's Manuscript Collection.

Creek, asking for an escort so he could proceed and discover the extent of damages.<sup>98</sup>

Colonel Tamblyn took all the cavalry he had at the post, plus a company of infantry, and went in person to examine the condition of affairs along the route.<sup>99</sup> He arrived at Ruthton on the evening of November 20 and left there the following morning, the cavalry escorting Brewster's party while the infantry escorted the train.

At Bluffton, army wagons were standing with no animals near them, the Indians having run off fifty-seven government mules from under the eyes of the escorting infantry.

They camped at Downer Station that night and continued their journey from there the next day. A short distance from Downer, they found the remains of Van Kechten, one of the carpenters, these they buried. They then traveled to Grant Station, which was evacuated, and camped for the night. The next day they reached Chalk Bluffs and found a group of men who had fled from the attacked stations. These men reported on the atrocities committed by the Indians. The one stock tender taken at Downer had been roasted over a fire. His tongue was cut out, because he cried so piteously.<sup>100</sup>

98. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865. Notice of receiving the message is verified by: "Fort Fletcher, /Kansas/ Order Book," Vol. 456--Department of Missouri (National Archives), Order No. 2.

99. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 3.

100. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865. In one account, this stock tender's name is given as "Ambrose." Atchison Daily Free Press, November 30, 1865.

The party reached Monument on the evening of November 24. At this station there was a detachment under a Captain Stroud. The group left this post the next morning with an escort of five cavalrymen, and an ambulance with three men in it. The ambulance was under the charge of Dr. Whipple who had come to Monument to dress the wounds of a man who had been scalped.<sup>101</sup>

They reached the station at Smoky Hill Spring where a large body of Indians attacked them. They fired on the Indians from the coach windows, and the Indians did not put up much fight. The ambulance was captured, but the doctor and his men escaped. The Indians surrounded them in the fortifications at the station, and tried to burn them out.<sup>102</sup>

The Indians had been able to drive off some of the stock at this station. Ten men of the Thirteenth Missouri Cavalry were stationed at this place. Five of these lost their horses when the Indians drove off the stock, but the other five did not lose theirs since they were away from the station hunting buffalo at the time of the attack. There were twenty-one men in all at the station. They took positions in a "bomb proof" which was dug into the side of the hill near the station,

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101. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865. See also: Harper's Weekly, X (January 27, 1866), p. 58. Here the date of departure from Monument is given as November 24, and the doctor's name is given as Surgeon N. C. Whipple.

102. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865. An account of the Indian's attempt to burn these men out of their safe position is given in: Harper's Weekly, X (April 21, 1866), p. 249. Concerning the capture of the ambulance, see: Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 4, 1865. This editor saw some benefit in the raid: "It will make all parties more particular in very many things before, almost unthought of."



and decided to defend themselves from there until the government train with its infantry escort should reach there. This train was due the next day and arrived on time. A small skirmish took place between the defenders and the Indians, after which the whole party proceeded toward Denver.<sup>103</sup>

After accompanying the group as far as Monument, Colonel Tamblin returned to Fort Fletcher. He then sent to headquarters, an account of the recent events along the route. The depredations, according to his account, amounted to: on November 19, the destruction of all property at Bluffton and Downer Stations, the death of an express messenger and two other employees of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Company at Downer Station, the death of three other company employees about four and one half miles west of Downer Station; on November 20, the death of one soldier and the wounding of another about one half mile west of Chalf Bluff; and on November 25, two soldiers wounded near Bluffton. The colonel stated that seven Indians were known to have been killed and others wounded during these encounters. He said that he could not pursue the Indians since his horses were in very poor condition. He commended his men for their action, but noted that he was badly in need of three more companies of cavalry. He said, "I have men enough to whip all the Indians on the Smoky Hills but I have not men enough to do escort duty."<sup>104</sup>

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103. Harper's Weekly, X (January 27, 1866), p. 58.

104. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 9.

On November 29, Colonel Tamblyn notified headquarters of Indians crossing the Smoky Hill and going toward the Santa Fe Route. He stated that the Butterfield Overland Dispatch coaches were all being supplied with escorts, and thought that service would soon be normal again. He requested one company of cavalry.<sup>105</sup>

A few days later he repeated his request for one company of cavalry, stating that General Brewster would send no more coaches over the route until reinforcements were on it. He noted that there were no troops stationed between Big Creek and Monument, since the intervening stations had all been burned. The Smoky Hill and Eaton Springs Stations were abandoned because there were no troops to protect them, the men being sent from those two posts to escort General Brewster safely to Ponds Creek.<sup>106</sup>

These depredations along the route changed the minds of some persons concerning the methods which should be used to control the Indians. The same paper which a month before carried an article supporting General Grant's policy, now spoke out strongly for a harsher policy.

By reference to our columns today, our readers may see how very friendly the Indians lately treated with by Gen. Sanborn have become. About a hundred miles of the Smoky Hill route is now in the hands of these red devils. Several persons have been killed. Some have suffered the fiery torture--a large amount of stock stolen and driven off, and vast quantities of property destroyed. When shall there be an end of the present imbecile policy that the government is pursuing towards

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105. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 10.

106. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 18.

these Indians? . . . The Indians are treated with and by the very power that should protect us, are furnished with the means to continue their devilish work in the shape of rations, blankets, and other presents. It is high time that this perniciously unjust way of dealing with our savage foes were stopped.<sup>107</sup>

A week later this paper noted that Generals Sherman and Dodge had promised to supply ample forces to protect the Smoky Hill Route against any further attacks. It noted also that the line had paid off all its bills up to December 1.<sup>108</sup>

Three coaches arrived at Fort Fletcher from Denver on December 9 and reported no Indians on the road, however, what might have been campfires were noticed at some distance from the road.<sup>109</sup>

An escort was sent from Fort Fletcher on December 12 to accompany a train of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Company to Monument Station. They were advised to camp the first night at Ruthton, then to travel to Downer Station the next day, to Chalk Bluff Station the third day, and to Monument Station the fourth day. The sergeant in charge was warned to take great care to guard against surprise.<sup>110</sup> However the sergeant must not have been too careful for the Indians did capture eight horses and four mules at Ruthton on December 17. Colonel Tamblin reported that no one had seen the Indians take the horses, nor did anyone miss them until morning. He noted further that the snow was very deep and the weather very cold causing several of his men

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107. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 1, 1865.

108. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 8, 1865.

109. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 24.

110. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Order No. 27.



to be badly frozen. He promised to pursue the Indians with all available men as soon as the weather moderated; again he described his critical need for one more company of cavalry and some good Indian scouts.<sup>111</sup>

Toward the end of December, 1865, an account tells of the appointment of Major Wynkoop, to provide safe escort to messengers from Black Kettle and Little Raven, chiefs of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, to the north of the Platte in order to contact portions of their tribes, convince them to return to their respective tribes, and become friends with the government. Previous messengers had been killed by the troops since they regarded all Indians along the route as enemies. This paper, speaking of the latter action, noted: "It may have been quite wrong to have done this, but the very pleasant style that these 'runners' had of taking to themselves little unconsidered trifles," such as one or two hundred head of government stock, and "a large portion of the top of the heads of Government soldiers, rendered the trifling mode of procedure one of absolute necessity."<sup>112</sup>

This same paper gave whole hearted support to resolutions proposed by Senator Pomeroy of Kansas on the methods of preventing further Indian attacks and of punishing offenders. The resolutions were stated as follows:

Whereas ineffectual efforts have been made during the past season to treat with, and conciliate, the hostile Indians upon

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111. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Lieutenant Colonel Tamblin to Captain Jacobs, December 18, 1865.

112. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 26, 1865.

our western border, and upon traveled routes to the mountains and the Pacific; and

Whereas, Recent demonstrations of hostility upon the lines of our communication between the States and mountain territories, embracing both the valleys of the Platte and the Smoky Hill, producing interruption, if not suspension of communications and commerce across the continent, resulting in the massacre and murder of many of our active, pioneering, and adventurous fellow citizens, and also the mutilation and death of whole coach-loads of unarmed travelers, embracing men, women and children: Therefore

Resolved, That the mild, conciliatory and even magnanimous conduct of our Government towards these savages not being understood or appreciated by them, but only construed to be weakness or cowardice, should now be followed by the most vigorous and decisive measures until these hostile tribes are effectually punished for their crimes, and whipped into a wholesome restraint and submission to the authority of the United States.

Resolved, That the greatly increasing demand for communication and peaceful travel and commerce to our western mountains and the Pacific, resulting from the discovery of gold, and precious metals, as well as the surveying and constructing of a Pacific railroad, renders it peculiarly urgent, and of national importance, that these routes of communications be and remain entirely uninterrupted. <sup>113</sup>

Big Creek Station was attacked by Indians toward the end of December, and cattle were driven off by the attackers. A lieutenant was chased a considerable distance during this foray and wounded badly, but not dangerously. <sup>114</sup>

Then the trouble with the Indians seemed to subside somewhat for only a few reports came in within the next four months, and the stages began to run on a more regular schedule.

C. A. Cook, Agent of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Line, placed a notice in a Denver paper on December 28, stating that coaches

113. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 27, 1865.

114. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 27, 1865.

would leave regularly for the east on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. At the same time, the Post Office Department was advertising for bids to carry the weekly mail between Junction City and Denver over the Smoky Hill Route, "once a week each way."<sup>115</sup> The United States Telegraph Company began setting up poles along the Smoky Hill Route, about the first of February, 1866.<sup>116</sup>

A report to headquarters from Colonel Tamblyn states that on January 4, 1866, there were no troops stationed at any place other than the military posts within his command area except for a detachment of thirteen men at Big Creek Station, nine miles west of Fort Fletcher. He noted that there were no troops between Monument and Big Creek Stations.<sup>117</sup>

An attack was made on a wagon and six Butterfield Overland Dispatch men on January 20, about halfway between Fossil and Walkers Creeks, ten miles east of Fort Fletcher. Two of the men were killed and the other four were wounded, one of them severely. Three of the wounded made it to Fort Fletcher and reported the incident, then troops were sent out to find the wounded man and recover the bodies of the dead men. The troops saw the Indians disappearing in the direction of the Republican River. Since too many of his men were on duty at other posts, Colonel Tamblyn could not send out forces to track down

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115. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 28, 1865.

116. Daily Rocky Mountain News, February 9, 1866. Another indication of the growing confidence in the value of this route.

117. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Lieutenant Colonel Tamblyn to Major Smith, January 4, 1866.



the Indians. He requested that the two companies of cavalry that were to report to him "be sent forward without delay."<sup>118</sup>

An order from the War Department stated that all freight for points south of Fort Laramie should be shipped to Fort Riley. This order made it necessary to protect the Smoky Hill Route, since that road was the main outlet from Fort Riley to the West.<sup>119</sup>

The coaches began to run to Denver about the middle of February, on a schedule of one coach a week. On February 14 an escort accompanied a coach when it left Fort Fletcher for Denver. Again on the 17th of February an escort was sent with two coaches loaded with passengers. There had been no signs of Indians near Fort Fletcher for sometime, and a report of some east of the fort, when investigated, did not prove true.<sup>120</sup>

An order was issued early in March, 1866, detailing a plan for the safety of travelers and trains crossing the plains. By this order, any travel over the Smoky Hill Route was to be organized and equipped for defense at Fort Riley. No train was to consist of less than twenty-two wagons and thirty armed men, under a "properly appointed captain." Commanders of posts along the route were to inspect all trains to assure compliance with the order. Additional escorts were to be provided if the post commander thought they were necessary,

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118. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Lieutenant Colonel Tamblyn to Major Smith, January 21, 1866.

119. Daily Rocky Mountain News, February 14, 1866.

120. "Fort Fletcher Order Book," Lieutenant Colonel Tamblyn to Major Smith, February 18, 1866.

and prompt assistance was to be furnished in case of an attack. No traveler was to be allowed to cross the plains, except in accordance with this plan.<sup>121</sup>

The trouble with the Indians was only one headache for the Butterfield Overland Dispatch, the line came under attack from persons who were advocates of the Platte Route and friends of Ben Holladay. One such attack came from a "bullwhacker" who claimed that the Butterfield Overland Dispatch was misrepresenting the route. He said that it was a route with water that abounds for "some hundred miles . . . destructive to animal life" and in dry seasons, that could be found only by digging. He claimed there was great loss of property on that account; then he cited names of men who had encountered such losses. He stated that the Butterfield Overland Dispatch was "robbing men of their just wages" and cited examples to prove the same.<sup>122</sup>

Whether these charges were true or false does not matter so much, however the Butterfield Overland Dispatch was running into difficulties and an announcement in the Atchison Daily Free Press, in March, 1866, justifies the conclusion that the company was probably having trouble paying its employees. This advertisement which announced the incorporation of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch into the stage lines owned by Ben Holladay contained this statement: "The new company guarantees payment to the employees of the late O. D. Co.,

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121. Daily Rocky Mountain News, March 6, 1866.

122. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 16, 1865.

and an agent is now en route from New York to pay them."<sup>123</sup> Thus D.

A. Butterfield's company passed into the hands of Ben Holladay.

Why had the Butterfield Company failed? The immense sums needed to outfit such a line, competition with men like Holladay who had mail contracts and protection for their stages, losses to the Indians, adverse criticisms--all probably played a part.

Oxen which cost \$160 to \$170 a yoke are not a small item when it comes to replacing them.<sup>124</sup> The price of grain, due to its scarcity since the Indians had destroyed so much, had risen to eight dollars a bushel. It is believed the company had lost over \$500,000 in consequence of the Indian raids.<sup>125</sup> Items such as these doubtlessly helped cause the collapse of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch. The company had received the encouragement of big express companies of the East, "but these did not come to the rescue at the critical juncture."<sup>126</sup>

After selling out to Holladay, D. A. Butterfield drifted to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he started a horse-railway. He was killed there on March 28, 1875, by being struck over the head with a neck yoke in the hands of an employee with whom he had been quarreling.<sup>127</sup>

123. Atchison Daily Free Press, March 17, 1866.

124. This price is given in: Root and Connelley, op. cit., p. 398.

125. Harper's Weekly, X (January 27, 1866), p. 58.

126. Hafen, op. cit., p. 285

127. "Butterfield's Overland Dispatch," Pony Express Courier, II (September, 1935), p. 10.



### CHAPTER III

#### BEN HOLLADAY AND THE SMOKY HILL ROUTE

Before purchasing the Butterfield Overland Dispatch, Holladay had sent some of his agents over that line, and had them note the condition of the route and the equipment. These agents reported all their findings to Holladay, who possessed a more detailed statement of resources than the Butterfield Overland Dispatch itself when the time came for bargaining over the sale price. Holladay named his own price which was accepted, thus the danger of competition was removed and Ben Holladay possessed a virtual monopoly on the stage service between the Missouri River and Great Salt Lake.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after Holladay began operating over the Smoky Hill Route, an advertisement for the "Holladay Overland Mail and Express Co." appeared in a Denver paper. This advertisement read as follows:

THE HOLLADAY OVERLAND MAIL AND EXPRESS CO., Carrying the Great Through Mail between the Atlantic and Pacific States. This Company is now Running Daily Coaches, Carrying Passengers, Mail and Express from Atchison, Kansas, . . . Special Attention paid to the Comfort and Convenience of Passengers. . . . Coaches for Atchison leave every morning at eight o'clock a. m. . . .

|                 |                             |         |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Time Table from | Missouri River to Salt Lake | 10 days |
|                 | Denver to Salt Lake         | 5 days  |

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1. Frederic Logan Paxson, The Last American Frontier (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), p. 189. For descriptions of the meeting between Holladay and the president of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch at the time of the sale, see: Dorothy Gardiner, West of the River (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, Publishers, 1941), pp. 290-291; Captain William Banning and George Hugh Banning, Six Horses (New York: The Century Company, [c 1930]), pp. 341-343; Frank A. Root and William Elsey Connelley, The Overland Stage to California (Topeka, Kansas, 1901), pp. 404-406.

Rates of Fare from Missouri River to Denver \$125 00

This company also carries Freight and Treasure Express In charge of competent and trustworthy Messengers, leaving Denver Every Thursday for Atchison, and leaving Atchison every Monday for Denver, Central City and Black Hawk.

Express charges on feight, 50¢ per pound.

Express charges on Treasure, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ per cent

Full particulars given at the office, corner of F and McGaa Streets.

Hugo Richards, Agent. <sup>2</sup>

The stages did not commence using this route for some days as new stations had to be built and other preparations completed before any real service could be performed. The company did begin constructing fifty-eight stations between Denver and Fort Riley.<sup>3</sup> Forage and stock were placed along the route. The work of preparing the route for business was being pushed forward from both ends of the line, April 15, 1866, was to be the first day for the mail to be carried over the route with stages supposedly operating even before that date. Alex Benham, an experienced stager, was superintending the work, and the Denver papers had great faith in his ability to do a good job quickly.<sup>4</sup>

Coaches began running over the Smoky Hill Route in April, one arrived in Denver on April 23. That same day, a surveying party under the charge of a Lieutenant Pierce left Denver to establish some cut-offs along the new route.

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2. This advertisement was arranged in a manner to attract attention. It contained information concerning all the Holladay Stage Line operations. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 3, 1866.

3. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 9, 1866; Weekly Rocky Mountain News, April 11, 1866.

4. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 13, 1866.

General Brewster arrived in Denver on April 20 by way of the Smoky Hill Road. He had journeyed to Denver to settle the affairs of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch Company. He told the newspaper editors that his party had encountered a group of about one hundred Sioux near Bluffton but that no trouble ensued. These Indians were some who had been induced to return south of the Platte and again assume a friendly status with the United States government. Brewster stated that Major Wyncoop seemed to be accomplishing some good on his mission of conciliating the Indians.<sup>5</sup>

A tri-weekly coach service was inaugurated over the route toward the end of April, with the coaches running between Denver and Topeka.<sup>6</sup> This was the first official service instituted by Holladay over the route, the previous coaches had carried only officials of the line. The first scheduled coach left Atchison with sixteen passengers on April 28, and arrived in Denver in five and one half days.<sup>7</sup> Mr. William Reynolds, superintendent of the Overland Mail and Express Company, arrived in Denver on the first coach on May 3, 1866. He reported no trouble whatsoever along the route which was now stocked for tri-weekly service. He noted that the work of constructing bridges, stables, and stations along the right of way was progressing favorably,

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5. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 23, 1866.

6. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 28, 1866. At this time, the railroad was building grade at a point a little west of Topeka. As the railroad moved west, the stage stations were moved to the end of the tracks.

7. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 4, 1866.



and that daily stages should be running between Denver and St. Mary's Mission, Kansas, sometime between May 20 and June 1.<sup>8</sup>

Corporal Lew Waite arrived in Denver on May 5 having followed the Smoky Hill Route alone on horseback. He stated that he had seen a party of seven Indians, but they had disappeared quickly when he made it appear as if he had many backers with him.<sup>9</sup> It appears that Indians were neither numerous nor antagonistic along the route at this time.

Lieutenant Pierce returned to Denver in early May and reported that the cut-offs on the newly surveyed route would shorten it about fifty or sixty miles. Both these cut-offs were in the Colorado portion of the route. These cut-offs would save one day's travel for the mail and express coaches, while the freight trains would save two or three days time.<sup>10</sup>

The Holladay coaches did start to run quite regularly in the late spring and early summer, making the trip usually in less than a week's time. The Rocky Mountain News of May 14 announced the arrival the previous evening of a coach loaded with passengers, which had made the trip from Atchison to Denver in six and one half days.<sup>11</sup> An

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8. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 4, 1866.

9. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 7, 1866.

10. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 8, 1866. This paper notes that a coach arrived in Denver on May 7, with a heavy express freight, making the trip from Atchison in seven days. A severe storm had kept it from making better time.

11. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 14, 1866.

account of July 21 notes that the coaches "continue to arrive punctually on time," with no reports from the passengers of Indians. This report claimed that the improvements along the Smoky Hill Route were such that it rivaled the Platte, "both for comfort and time."<sup>12</sup>

Bayard Taylor traveled over the Smoky Hill Route in the early summer of 1866. He notes that there had been no Indian trouble along the route for sometime, but everyone anticipated trouble. Nevertheless, he traveled from Ellsworth to Big Creek Station without incident. He reports that the driver of the stage claimed to have had trouble with a band of about forty Indians about three weeks earlier in the vicinity of Buffalo Creek, ten miles west of Fort Ellsworth. The Indians did not harm anything but made threatening gestures, the driver told Taylor. Taylor reports seeing large herds of buffalo between Lost Creek and Fossil Creek on this trip.<sup>13</sup>

Alex Benham received orders from the company headquarters on August 3 to proceed to Atchison for the purpose of stocking the Smoky Hill Route for a daily line. He left Denver on August 5 to carry out the order. Reports circulated that the daily coaches would probably be running by September 1.<sup>14</sup>

The eastern terminus of the Holladay coach line was moved from Atchison to Manhattan in August, 1866, and indications were that it

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12. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 21, 1866. This account mentions again that the route will shortly be stocked for a daily line.

13. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 25, 1866.

14. Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 4, 1866.

would be moved further west as the railroad progressed up the Kaw and its tributary.<sup>15</sup>

The stock was taken off the line east of Junction City, and arrangements were made with the railroad to pick up the mail at that place. The stage time between Denver and Junction City was three days at this time, and train time between Kansas City and Junction City was eight hours. As one paper stated: "Only three days and eight hours from America.. Verily, civilization is approaching Denver." <sup>16</sup>

Early in September one paper stated that the Smoky Hill "is now fully proven to be in all respects superior as a road for wagons, to the Platte Valley." Heavy cattle trains had made better time all that season by the Smoky Hill Route, "than anybody's mule outfits from any point on the river." <sup>17</sup>

Thus far the Holladay venture on the Smoky Hill Route was free from Indian troubles, but this was to change soon.

#### Trouble With the Indians

On September 8, a paper reported that Indians had stopped the stage on the Smoky Hill Route and "given them seven days to take all

15. Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 28, 1866. Hafen states that the change of terminus took place on August 15. LeRoy R. Hafen, The Overland Mail, 1849-1869, Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1926), p. 317.

16. Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 20, 1866.

17. Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 4, 1866. This paper noted that a train under S. Dolman would leave the eastern terminus of the stage line for Denver sometime in the week.



their stock off the road." About this time General Hancock provided an escort for Major-General Cloud to visit the Pawnee and Omaha tribes to seek indemnity for their actions.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the Holladay Company continued to stock the line for daily service, with many coaches arriving in Denver on September 11 for stocking purposes. A depot was to be set up in Denver where coaches and express wagons would be manufactured and repaired. But the Indians had given their warning, they killed two teamsters seventy miles west of the Little Blue, and swore they would hold the Smoky Hill Route against all odds.<sup>19</sup>

A change was made in the mail schedule over the Smoky Hill Route at this time. The new schedule called for the mail to leave Denver daily at four p. m., with all mail for points farther east than Iowa going by way of the Smoky Hill to the St. Joseph D. P. O., and only a way mail going by the Platte Route.<sup>20</sup>

One passenger who left Denver on September 8 wrote from Wyandotte, Kansas, to the editors of the Rocky Mountain News. He had met one band of twelve "friendly Cheyennes, armed to the teeth," who had just taken possession of a station before his coach drove up to the place. These Indians had eaten every thing in the place, and had done likewise at three or four other stations along the route, thus

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18. Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 8, 1866.

19. Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 12, 1866.

20. Ibid.

the hungry passengers did without. Nevertheless, the stock tenders were glad to get by so easy, at least they hadn't lost their lives or stock.<sup>21</sup>

Samuel Dolman's train arrived safely in Denver with his merchandise for the merchants there. He stated that he saw no signs of Indians along the road, during the thirty odd days in which he was on the route. His train consisted of five wagons, each weighing 4,500 pounds which were pulled by four yoke of cattle. He had averaged between eighteen and twenty-three miles a day; but was delayed along the way for about ten days by a severe storm.<sup>22</sup>

Just about this same time, there was an attack on Chalk Bluff's Station and two of the stock tenders were murdered. No stock was stolen, nor were other depredations committed, the men were not even scalped.<sup>23</sup> A report concerning this attack appeared in the Denver paper, the facts having been supplied by a man who arrived at the station in time to talk to one of the victims before he died. The victims were Mr. Henry Kelly and a Mr. Waldur. They had given the Indians a meal to eat, after which the Indians pounced upon them, lancing Mr. Kelly who died at once, and shooting Mr. Waldur with a

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21. Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 20, 1866. This person also tells about great herds of buffalo that were seen all along the route for nearly two hundred miles. He stated that the coach had to stop three times to allow herds of them to pass. During one of these stops, the passengers shot two buffalo.

22. Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 3, 1866. Dolman's train arrived in Denver on October 1.

23. Ibid.

revolver, leaving him for dead. This attack had taken place on September 29. Mr. Waldur died early on September 30, and the party that arrived there that morning buried the two men near the station.<sup>24</sup>

Some days later, this same station was attacked again, this time the station was burned. One account states that three Indians had approached the station but were warned off by four white men at the station. The Indians then added two more to their number and came toward the station again, but once more the men warned them not to advance. The Indians left, but soon met a group of soldiers under the charge of a certain Lieutenant Flood. The Indians, who now numbered about thirty, greeted the detachment and rode up to the station with them. The men at the station told the lieutenant what had happened before he arrived and asked him to leave some of his men at the station to protect it, as they felt sure the Indians intended to destroy it. Lieutenant Flood refused their request and the men, being afraid to remain alone at the place, gathered their stock and what things they could carry and left with the soldiers. They had hardly passed out of sight of the station, when the Indians set it afire. The Indians were the Dog soldiers.<sup>25</sup>

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24. Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 4, 1866. General Hancock charged this attack on Cheyenne Indians. He further inferred that "Mr. Butterfield, has, I presume, traded arms and ammunition to these tribes." See: W. P. Harrington, History of Gove County (Gove City, Kansas; Republican-Gazette Office, 1930), p. 9.

25. Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 18, 1866. This paper stated: "According to our information, Lt. Flood deserves punishment for the course he pursued in this instance--marching an enemy into the station and then going off, and leaving the place unprotected."



James Wadsworth, a driver on the Overland Express, also stated that the attack on Chalk Bluffs was by Cheyenne Indians. He further noted that he had been attacked by the same Indians at Monument Station.<sup>26</sup>

One Denver paper became somewhat disturbed with the federal government's policy concerning the Indians. An article stated in part:

The Indians are quiet along the Platte, but declare that they will clean out the Smoky Hill Route. It seems a little strange that Government will persist in giving them rations at the posts along the Platte, when they make such hostile declarations.<sup>27</sup>

Holladay had bought out Butterfield and thus destroyed his major competitor, but troubles were now mounting for him. The Indian attacks were but part of the trouble; the railroads were advancing faster than he had expected. He foresaw the end of his great staging business, so he desired to sell out before he lost too much. He sold his interests on November 1, 1866, and on December 10, the name of the new company was listed as Wells, Fargo and Company. Holladay received \$1,500,000 in cash, \$300,000 worth of stock in the new company, and became a director in the new firm.<sup>28</sup>

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26. Harrington, op. cit., p. 9.

27. Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 5, 1866.

28. J. V. Frederick, Ben Holladay The Stagecoach King, A Chapter in the Development of Transcontinental Transportation (Glendale, California: The Author H. Clark Company, 1940), pp. 260-261.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UNITED STATES EXPRESS COMPANY

Wells, Fargo and Company bought out Holladay in November, 1866, but did not operate the lines over the Smoky Hill Route very long; for, within three months time they sold all their interest in the stage line between Junction City, Kansas, and Denver, by way of the Smoky Hill Route, to the United States Express Company.<sup>1</sup> The actual transfer<sup>2</sup> of ownership took place on February 1, 1867.

During the short time that "Wells Fargo" had operated the line over the Smoky Hill Route, they had no easy time of it, for the winter was a bitter cold one with deep snow hampering the stages. Near the end of January, 1867, just before the transfer of the line was accomplished, the mails were two days behind schedule. They were delayed by the snow and cold weather.<sup>3</sup>

The United States Express Company paid \$292,987.92 for the Smoky Hill Line. The property that went with this purchase consisted of four hundred and eighty head of stock (horses and mules), nineteen Concord coaches, twenty express wagons and forty stations, including houses and barns, all completely stocked for a daily line.

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1. Daily Rocky Mountain News, January 30, 1867. See also: Lieutenant Colonel J. W. Davidson, "Report on the Overland Stage Co. From Fort Harker to Denver City," July 17, 1867.

2. Daily Rocky Mountain News, February 1, 1867. Advertisements of the new line soon appeared in the various papers. See: Daily Rocky Mountain News, February 4, 1867.

3. Daily Rocky Mountain News, January 26, 1867.

At the time of the sale, the route from Lookout Station to Willow Creek Station was protected by guards of from ten to fifteen soldiers at the intermediate stations. During February, most of these guards were withdrawn, leaving many of the stations unguarded.<sup>4</sup>

When the new company purchased the route, Mr. W. H. Cottrell, general superintendent, informed the people of Denver that the scheduled time between Denver and St. Louis would be five days.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, climatic conditions were such during the early part of 1867, that it was hard to keep to any schedule. Heavy rains had caused many streams to rise to abnormal heights making passage impossible. A coach arrived in Denver on February 14, two days late and with no mail. A Denver paper reported: "The trouble seems to be on account of high water. A certain stream down that road, called Big Creek, has been so big for several days past that the coaches could not get over. From that point they have been obliged to turn back both ways."<sup>6</sup>

But weather was not the only hazard that the new company had to face. It wasn't long until the Indians were causing trouble again.

#### Continued Indian Troubles

Early in March the Secretary of War proposed to apply the rules, laid down by General Pope concerning travel on the plains, to the Smoky Hill Route. He gave the post commanders along the route more

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4. J. W. Davidson, op. cit.

5. Daily Rocky Mountain News, January 31, 1867.

6. Daily Rocky Mountain News, February 14, 1867.



latitude in judging whether a train was suitably protected or not; however, each train had to be organized in a military manner and consist of not less than thirty men and twenty wagons. All travelers were held responsible for faithful observance of all the regulations established for safety reasons.<sup>7</sup>

A correspondent of the Leavenworth Times, writing about this time, listed the names and numbers of Indian tribes who lived near enough to cause trouble along the Smoky Hill Route. His account read as follows:

On the route itself there are the following tribes: Cheyennes 4,000 strong, have about 1,300 warriors; Black-kettle chief. Arapahoes 1,300 strong; have 900 warriors; Little Raven, chief. Apaches 600 strong; have 200 warriors; Wolf Sleeve and Poor Bear, chiefs. These Indians compose the agency of Major Wynkoop. South of here, on the Arkansas river, there are two tribes under colonel Leavenworth, agent, who are allied at present. They are: Kiowas, 4,000 persons, 1,300 warriors, Santatee and Santank, chiefs, and Comanches. The number of these is not known, as many of them have never come near an agency; it is estimated that there are at least 10,000 persons or 3,500 warriors, near enough to take part in any fight, should there be a war this summer. Their chiefs are Ten Bears and Movay. The latter is thought to be derived from the French word mauvais--bad. The Sioux Indians which are by far the most numerous, are so far north that no danger is expected from them on this route.<sup>8</sup>

Within three weeks from the time this report appeared in the paper, the Indians were making their presence felt along the stage route. On April 15, a band of Cheyennes made an attack on Lookout

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7. Daily Rocky Mountain News, March 9, 1867. All travelers were expected to observe faithfully the provisions of treaties with the Indian tribes through whose country they might pass.

8. Daily Rocky Mountain News, March 26, 1867.

Station. Three men were murdered during this attack; their names were Robert Anderson, John Reynolds, and Frank Carter. "Their bodies were found scalped, mutilated, and partially consumed by the fire that destroyed the station."<sup>9</sup> Eight horses were stolen from the station by the Indians, and a great amount of grain and equipment were destroyed by the fire.<sup>10</sup>

Almost daily attacks were made by the Indians after that date. On April 16, ten mules were stolen "on the road;" Chalk Bluff Station was attacked and twenty-four horses were stolen on April 17; while great amounts of hay and grain were burned at Walkers Creek Station on April 18. On April 21, eight horses were stolen from Chalk Bluff Station and a similar number of horses plus one mule were taken from Russells Springs Station on April 24. The greatest damage during April occurred on April 29 at Goose Creek Station when the station and house were destroyed by fire. Eight mules were stolen, and large amounts of grain, equipment and fire wood were burned.<sup>11</sup>

During April the overland mails were transferred from the Platte Route to the Smoky Hill Route because the roads were impassible on the

9. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 20, 1867. Lookout Station was the first station west of Big Creek Station. This paper gives an account of an attempt by General Hancock to hold a council with some Indians near Fort Zarah. These Indians refused to meet him and fled north, therefore it was believed these were the same ones who then attacked Lookout. See also: Harper's Weekly, XI (April 27, 1867), p. 270; XI (May 11, 1867), p. 301; XI (June 8, 1867), p. 359.

10. J. W. Davidson, op. cit.

11. Ibid. Goose Creek was the first station west of Pond Creek. See Appendix C.

former. Travel was completely stopped along the Platte Route for some weeks at this time and between two hundred and three hundred passengers left Omaha to travel to the eastern terminus of the Smoky Hill Route in order to get passage to Denver.<sup>12</sup>

The increasing number of Indian attacks brought comment from some sources. The government's Indian policy came under severe attack from one Denver paper. The article read as follows:

Report is circulated that there has been a fight lately, down the Smoky Hill road, between a party of soldiers and the indians, and that it resulted in the early demise of half a dozen of the red varmints. If it is true that any commanding officer has dared to attack and slay our red brethern (?) we shall be on the watch and expecting to hear that he has been court martialled for the offense. Our venerable uncle, through his servants at Washington, seems to hold it to be criminal offense to fire on indians, for it hurts their feelings, and besides, it might kill them, and then there wouldn't be land enough this side of the Missouri to pay for the loss. Perhaps they think it is better to feed these red rascals and let them steal and kill when they please, than it is to go for them in earnest, and civilize 'em. We don't see it in that light. We believe in civilizing 'em just in the same manner as the officer reported has done.<sup>13</sup>

The military authorities decided that the stations should be protected; accordingly, men were placed at all stations along the troublesome district of the route.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the Indians, who appear to have moved west some distance, attacked Lake Station in Colorado about midnight of May 11, and caused great damage there.<sup>15</sup> A storehouse full

12. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 24, 1867.

13. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1867. The word "Indians" was spelled with a small "i" in this account.

14. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 1, 1867.

15. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 13, 1867. This account lists ten horses killed.



of supplies, a stable, much grain and a great deal of equipment were burned. Fourteen horses were destroyed.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless the coaches continued to travel over the route. W. S. Walker, agent of the company at Denver, applied to Governor Hall for arms to equip the personnel at the various stations. The coaches were arriving on time, the stock run off by the Indians having been replaced.<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Fox, assistant division agent of the company, arrived at Denver on May 15. He reported on the various Indian raids and on what was being done to combat them. He stated that the Indians did not seem to care about killing people, but only wished to steal and destroy all animals and equipment that they could reach. The company employees, with the addition of military forces, were quite a sizable force for defense of the stations. Forts connected by underground passages with the houses and stables, and occupied with sufficient men and ammunition to put up a good fight, had been constructed at many of the stations. All personnel had been given orders to fire at any Indian they might see. General Hancock stated that there wasn't one friendly Indian on the plains, and he intended to engage them in battle soon. Guards were watching at all the stations both day and night for any sign of Indians. Mr. Fox believed that the new defense system would insure regular operations of the line.<sup>18</sup>

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16. J. W. Davidson, op. cit.

17. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 14, 1867.

18. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 15, 1867.

The coaches did arrive with regularity at Denver between May 16 and May 22. Much merchandise for Denver merchants arrived during this period.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless the company and the military both increased the number of guards at the stations along the route. A coach left Denver on May 17 with men to be dropped at the stations. General Hancock ordered ten soldiers to be placed at every station between Lookout and Lake, with one hundred to be posted at Downer, Chalk Bluff, Monument, Big Timber and Big Springs. He said that more would be sent if necessary.<sup>20</sup>

Some shippers were unwilling to risk sending their freight by the Smoky Hill Route at this time, so they sent it up the Missouri River to be shipped by the Union Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

Between June 3 and June 11, many coaches arrived at Denver, however few of them were on time as far as their schedule was concerned. The delays were not caused by Indians, but by bad roads. Most of these coaches carried mail, and reported no Indian trouble. The coaches were also running from Denver to the eastern end of the route during the period.<sup>22</sup>

However attacks were made along the route during June. Reports list attacks at Henshaw on June 4 when eight horses were stolen; Goose

19. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 16, 1867; May 22, 1867.

20. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 18, 1867; May 23, 1867

21. Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 29, 1867.

22. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 3, 1867; June 4, 1867; June 6, 1867; June 10, 1867; June 12, 1867.

Creek on June 10 with eight mules stolen; Russell Springs on June 16 with four horses and four mules stolen; Henshaw on June 21 with nine horses stolen; and Pond Creek, Bunker Hill and Fossil Creek on June 26 with eight horses, four horses and four horses, respectively, stolen.<sup>23</sup> An attack on Fort Wallace on June 22 by about three hundred Indians resulted in the death of two soldiers, the wounding of several more, and the theft of sixteen head of stock.<sup>24</sup> Another attack on Fort Wallace took place on June 26 with seven soldiers killed, four wounded severely, and three wounded slightly.<sup>25</sup>

Nature was also doing her part to delay the coaches. Floods were common along the lower reaches of the Smoky Hill during June. Around Salina and Ellsworth, the mail and express were being detained by high water; while Big Creek reportedly had thirty feet of water in it.<sup>26</sup> Two coaches arrived in Denver on June 27, having been ten days and eight days, respectively, on the road after leaving Salina. The

23. J. W. Davidson, op. cit. For the later attack on Henshaw, see: Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 27, 1867.

24. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 27, 1867; July 11, 1867. One account of this attack states that four hundred Indians took part in it. Seven soldiers were killed, while twenty Indians lost their lives. Harper's Weekly, XI (July 13, 1867), p. 435.

25. Harper's Weekly, XI (July 27, 1867), p. 467. The names of the dead and wounded are given in this account. Further details of this engagement and of the atrocities committed by the Indians, can be found on page 468 of this magazine. This latter account also mentions an attack on June 16, fourteen miles west of Fort Harker, in which one man was killed.

26. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 22, 1867. One account states that operations ceased on the Smoky Hill at this time--this must have been a false report. Harper's Weekly, XI (June 22, 1867), p. 387.



floods had caused their slow progress. It was reported that the bridge at Salina was carried away by the flood.<sup>27</sup>

Still the Indian problem kept the spotlight in the news. The Chicago Journal was condemned for criticizing Mr. Cotrill (Cotrell) of the stage company for his order to shoot all Indians on sight. The Journal had claimed that this order was the cause of all the trouble on the Smoky Hill Route, but other papers disagreed. One paper pointed out that the Indians took quite a few scalps after pretending to be peaceful until they had the victim in their power. This paper thought the order was sensible, since it had saved many lives.<sup>28</sup>

An attack occurred between Big Timber and Pond Creek early in July. One soldier was wounded during the attack.<sup>29</sup> All this time the company continued to keep a regular service going. More troops were added as protection at troublesome places; and the company attempted to repair burned stations and replace stock and equipment.<sup>30</sup>

A new method of protecting the coaches was tried. Ten soldiers were on guard at each station along the route; and two coaches were

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27. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 27, 1867. The company's advertisements in the News of July 1, states: "The Smoky Hill Route is over one of the best natural roads in the world no obstructions by impassable streams or bottom lands." Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 1, 1867. This advertisement lists the time between Ellsworth and Denver as three and a half days--the floods surely slowed down the schedule.

28. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 10, 1867.

29. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 11, 1867. A train of sixty wagons left Pond Creek on July 3 for Denver. A certain Carlisle was in charge of the major portion of this train.

30. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 16, 1867.

sent out on each trip, one of them containing a guard of soldiers. The company was sure they could keep the line open unless the attacks became more numerous than ever before. The time required for a trip was now set at seventy-two hours.<sup>31</sup>

By November, the line was in full operation once more. Coaches were running on schedule, and passengers were registered for two or three days ahead.<sup>32</sup>

The coaches continued to arrive on schedule, and by June, 1868, the time between Denver and Monument Station, to which point the railroad had progressed, was forty-six hours.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, all was not well along the Smoky Hill. Early in the fall, the government decided to withdraw the mails from this route. The territorial officers and the officials of Kansas both protested the government's act, and the railroad officials did likewise. A Denver paper called upon the business men of Denver, Leavenworth, and St. Louis to join in a protest and to bring all possible pressure to bear on officials at Washington in order to have the mails restored.<sup>34</sup>

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31. The Rocky Mountain News, September 4, 1867, as quoted in Colorado State Historical Society's "Manuscript XXVI-1e."

32. Daily Rocky Mountain News, November 1, 1867.

33. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 11, 1868. General Grant, who had been nominated for the presidency, accompanied by Generals Sherman, Sheridan and F. T. Dent, arrived in Denver on July 21, 1868. They had traveled by way of the Smoky Hill Route. Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1889), I, p. 453. A sign of the route's favor, when such men as these, use it in preference to other roads.

34. Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 31, 1868.

### Increased Staging Activity

Wells, Fargo and Company, were again running coaches on the Smoky Hill Route in December, 1868. They had a daily line established, with a fare of \$58.78 between Denver and Leavenworth. They also were delivering express matter in nine days from New York.<sup>35</sup>

By March, 1869, the passenger travel had increased considerably. In one week, 101 passengers had been carried to Denver, and 74 had been carried from Denver by Wells, Fargo stages. At this time the Kansas Pacific Railway Company opened an office in Denver to contract for the shipment of westward bound goods.<sup>36</sup>

A train of thirteen wagons arrived at Denver from Sheridan, Kansas, on April 28, carrying 53,000 pounds of freight for Denver merchants. Goods were received from St. Louis by way of the Smoky Hill Route within twenty days of shipment.<sup>37</sup>

One account states that arrivals in Denver were increasing daily in May of 1869. It listed the names of five arrivals on May 18, and of seven others who arrived on May 19. It noted that four horse coaches were to be put on the route to accommodate the increased passenger travel.<sup>38</sup>

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35. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 22, 1868. The coaches ran between the western terminus of the railroad and Denver.

36. Daily Rocky Mountain News, March 22, 1869.

37. Weekly Rocky Mountain News, April 28, 1869.

38. Weekly Rocky Mountain News, May 19, 1869. Another account states: "It looks like old times to see the big Smoky Hill trains, of ox and mule teams, again in our streets." Daily Rocky Mountain News, May 18, 1869.



By December, 1869, the fare from Denver to Leavenworth or Kansas City, by the Smoky Hill Route was \$50.75, the same as the fare to Omaha. An advertisement pointed out the time and expense that could be saved by anyone who wished to reach St. Louis, or cities east of there, and who took the above named route.<sup>39</sup>

#### Decline of Staging on the Smoky Hill Route

The railroad was gradually progressing toward Denver. As the steel rails were laid ever farther west, the stage line was shortened just that much more. With the shortening of the stage lines, much of the glamour of the old freighting and staging days was gone. Toward the end of 1869, Wells, Fargo and Company again sold their staging interest, this time Hughes and Company succeeded to their lines between Cheyenne Wells and Denver; while the Southern Overland Mail and Express Company operated the line between Cheyenne Wells and Sheridan, Kansas.<sup>40</sup> By the late summer of 1870, the railroad reached Denver and staging over the Smoky Hill Route was at an end.<sup>41</sup>

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39. Daily Rocky Mountain News, December 8, 1869.

40. Daily Rocky Mountain News, January 3, 1870.

41. Henry V. Poor, Manual of the Railroads of the United States for 1886 (New York: H. V. and H. W. Poor, 1886), p. 748.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RAILROAD ALONG THE SMOKY HILL ROUTE

The Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western Railroad was chartered by the legislature of Kansas and was recognized by the acts of Congress of July 1, 1862, and July 2, 1864. It was made recipient of a grant of public lands to the extent of 12,800 acres per mile, and subsidy bonds of the government to the amount of \$16,000 per mile for a distance of 394 miles west from the Missouri River, the total value of the bonds amounting to \$6,303,000. The name of the company was changed on June 6, 1863, to the Union Pacific Eastern Division, and by an act of Congress of May 31, 1868, to the Kansas Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

The railroad was in Lawrence, Kansas, by the latter part of September, 1865, and it was believed that it should reach Manhattan by November 1.<sup>2</sup> The Denver paper was supporting the Smoky Hill Route over the Republican River Route as the better route for the railroad to follow. After the Fitch survey report became known, they increased their editorials in support of the Smoky Hill Route.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Henry V. Poor, Manual of the Railroads of the United States for 1886 (New York: H. V. and H. W. Poor, 1886), p. 748.

2. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 18, 1865.

3. The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 21, 1865. See also: The Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 17, 1865. In the latter, the editor states that \$1,200,000 could be saved by building the railroad along the Smoky Hill Route instead of along the Platte Route, since the former was about eighty miles shorter than the latter, and it cost on an average \$15,000 to lay a mile of railroad track.

Surveys were made of tentative routes along both the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers in the late summer and early fall of 1865. George T. Wickes was in charge of the group that surveyed the Smoky Hill Route. His group left Fort Riley on September 15, 1865, and arrived in Denver on November 10, 1865. They calculated the distance along the route as 466.6 miles between Fort Riley and Denver, or 601 miles from Denver to the Missouri River.<sup>4</sup>

The surveys were completed and the Smoky Hill was the favored route, but before any building could be started over that route, government permission was needed to change the plans from the Republican Route to the Smoky Hill. Much haggling over the change of route took place between those interested in the Smoky Hill Valley and those speculators who had purchased land along the Republican River, when they thought that the railroad was to follow that river. The speculators demanded an opportunity to take up an amount of land along the new route equal to that which they held along the Republican, before any permission should be given to the company that would allow it to continue its lines beyond Fort Riley, the point at which the Republican joins the Smoky Hill to form the Kansas River.<sup>5</sup> Finally in June, 1866, the bill was passed by the Senate to allow the change

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4. Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division, "Surveys of the Smoky Hill Route and of the Republican Route," 1865. Reports concerning the progress of this survey can be found in: The Daily Rocky Mountain News, September 26, 1865; October 26, 1865; October 30, 1865.

5. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 11, 1866. See also: May 7, 1866; June 8, 1866.



of route, and after House approval, construction on the road resumed.<sup>6</sup> The line was open for business to Manhattan in August, although work had progressed quite some distance farther.<sup>7</sup>

By June, 1867, work was in progress near Fort Harker. On June 27, a camp of railway employees was attacked near there by a band of Indians, and one white man and six Indians were killed.<sup>8</sup> Attacks were made on workers between Fort Harker and Wilson's Creek quite frequently during the months of July, August and September. Negro troops were stationed in that area at the time, and they gave the Indians some real opposition.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of Indian troubles, the road continued to push west. There was a great council held between the Indians and the peace commissioners on the North Platte in the early fall of 1867. The Indians demanded that the work on the Smoky Hill railroad be halted. Reporting on this council, an account stated that continued Indian trouble was inevitable since the white men could not afford to give in to the Indians' demands. They suggested completing the railroad as quickly as possible, "making every station and village on the route a base

6. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 30, 1866. Hall states that the Senate passed the bill on June 19, and the House gave its approval on June 26. Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1889), I, p. 393.

7. Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 28, 1866.

8. Harper's Weekly, XI (July 13, 1867), p. 435.

9. Daily Rocky Mountain News, July 31, 1867. This account tells the story of a supposedly insane white woman who was seen near Fossil Creek by a party of negro troops. Concerning the Indian attacks, see: Harper's Weekly, XI (September 7, 1867), p. 564.

for military operations" to help in the successful prosecution of the Indian War.<sup>10</sup>

By June, 1868, the railroad had progressed as far as Monument Station, Kansas, and the stage line was making connections there.<sup>11</sup>

During the summer and fall of 1868, the military forces under Generals Sheridan and Sherman were constantly searching for the marauding Indians and carrying on a campaign of extermination against them.<sup>12</sup>

The railroad gradually lengthened its lines until it reached Sheridan, Kansas, August 23, 1868.<sup>13</sup> Here it halted for months while awaiting authorization to progress on to Denver.<sup>14</sup> The stage line then had its eastern terminus at Sheridan.

Indian attacks continued at various places along the line, the attackers hoping to delay new building or to destroy that which had already been completed. Early in the spring of 1869, the attacks became quite frequent. Some people expected a general outbreak of trouble.<sup>15</sup>

10. Daily Rocky Mountain News, October 30, 1867.

11. Daily Rocky Mountain News, June 11, 1868.

12. Harper's Weekly, XII (October 10, 1868), p. 641.

13. O. P. Byers, "When Railroading Outdid the Wild West Stories," Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1926-1928, XVII (Topeka, Kansas, 1928), p. 342.

14. General William J. Palmer, Report of Surveys Across the Continent in 1867-68 (Philadelphia: W. B. Selheimer, 1869), p. 7. The railroad was 405 miles in length at this time.

15. Daily Rocky Mountain News, April 19, 1869. See also: Adolph Roenigk, Pioneer History of Kansas (Denver: Great Western Publishing Company, c 1933/), pp. 171-180.

Surveys of the route between Sheridan and Denver were made toward the end of 1869.<sup>16</sup> Early in 1870 the actual work on the road began again. The first train arrived in Denver from Kansas City on August 16, 1870, and five days later the last stage over the Smoky Hill Trail was driven into Denver. The days of staging on the Smoky Hill were over, and those of the railroad had begun.<sup>17</sup>

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16. George L. Anderson, General William J. Palmer, A Decade of Colorado Railroad Building, 1870-1880 (Colorado Springs: Colorado College, 1936), pp. 20-21.

17. William A. Johnstone, "History of the Smoky Hill Trail," as found in Kansas State Historical Society's Trails Clippings, II, p. 297. From Kansas City to Denver, over the completed railroad, was a distance of 638 miles. Poor, op. cit., p. 748.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

The history of the Smoky Hill Trail during the decade 1859-1869 contains in actuality all the elements which are so prominent in nearly every novel concerning the early West.

Before 1859 there had been some travel along the Smoky Hill River by explorers such as Colonel John C. Fremont; but it was not until gold was discovered in Colorado in 1858 that many people became interested in the advantages that this route might possess over either of the better known trails, the Platte and the Arkansas.

Gradually some of the prospectors began to follow this route and told others about the time they saved by doing so; therefore quite a few followed this trail in 1859. However, some experienced great difficulties when they attempted to travel over this area during the dry season, and tales of horror, repeated and embellished by those who encountered trouble, caused the route to fall into disrepute for a time.

Nevertheless, the people of Denver, as well as the people of Leavenworth and other towns that would benefit from any route that would follow the Smoky Hill Valley, decided to explore the possibilities of a new road to the West along this river. In the early part of 1860, W. Green Russell lead one group of surveyors over the area and reported favorably on a proposed route. Another survey was completed in the summer of 1860 under the supervision of H. T. Green.

This group also recommended the Smoky Hill Valley as the most favorable route between the Missouri River and the Gold Fields.

Still the trail did not draw many supporters. The old tales concerning the lack of water to be encountered along the upper section of the route kept many from attempting to travel over it. Added to these tales, were the accounts concerning Indian attacks along the Smoky Hill Valley during 1862 and 1864. Such was the early history of the trail--a story of fear which kept travel at a minimum along this river valley for the greater part of six years.

The period of increased travel over the trail began in the summer of 1865. D. A. Butterfield had organized a stock company to establish a road by way of this river valley between Leavenworth and Denver. Early in June, a survey team left Leavenworth under the supervision of Lieutenant Julian Fitch to mark the best route. A construction detail under Isaac Eaton accompanied this survey party and began the work of establishing station sites for the stage line. Very favorable reports concerning the route were written by both Lieutenant Fitch and Isaac Eaton upon the completion of their work.

The Butterfield Dispatch was soon in operation carrying express and freight over the new route, and by September 23, 1865, the first passenger stage had reached Denver.

The new company had great difficulties to overcome from the very start, for in October, 1865, the Indians began attacking their coaches and stations. Many tales of heroism and horror were enacted during these Indian attacks. At first there were not enough soldiers

to carry out adequate defense measures, but as time passed and the Indian attacks increased in number and ferocity, the military strength was increased and annihilation tactics were used.

Great losses were encountered by the Butterfield Dispatch through these Indian attacks. This fact, plus the growing competition from the better protected, and therefore safer, Platte Route, finally forced the sale of the nearly bankrupt company. The sale took place in the early part of 1866, the new owner being the Holladay Overland Mail and Express Company, under the guidance of Ben Holladay.

After repairing the damage done by the Indians, the new line began to operate with some regularity about April, 1866. For some months the Indians did not molest the property of the new company, but in the late fall they again began regular depredations along the route.

Military posts had been established at Fort Harker in 1864, and at Camp (Fort) Fletcher, Monument, and Pond Creek (Fort Wallace) in 1865. From the four posts troops were sent to the stations along the route to protect the property, and on some occasions escorts were sent with the coaches. However, the number of military personnel was frequently too small to cope with the large bands of Indians attacking, so the great loss of life and property continued.

The railroad line was gradually approaching the juncture of the Smoky Hill and Republican Rivers in the summer of 1866, and this, plus the losses he had suffered from Indian raids, influenced Ben Holladay to sell out before he suffered any further loss. This sale



took place in November, 1866, and the purchaser was Wells, Fargo and Company.

The new owners in turn sold their interests along the Smoky Hill Route to the United States Express Company in February, 1867, after operating the line during one of the severest winters on record.

The United States Express also felt the wrath of nature in the early spring of 1867 when the Smoky Hill River and its tributary streams, swollen by heavy rains, flooded the low lying areas along the route. The Indians continued attacking the stage line, and the company found it hard to keep sufficient stock and equipment on the line for regular operation. Floods were again prevalent in the early part of the summer causing delays in scheduled operations.

The railroad was being built between Fort Harker and Fort Hays during the summer of 1867; as the railroad moved west, the stage line was shortened accordingly.

By the summer of 1868, the railroad arrived at Monument Station, and reached Sheridan, Kansas, in August. The stage line then operated from Sheridan until further construction on the railroad began in the early part of 1870.

In December, 1868, Wells, Fargo and Company were again active in the staging business over the Smoky Hill Route. From the end of 1868 until the railroad finally made its entry into Denver in the early fall of 1870, travel by stage was quite heavy between the western terminus of the railroad and Denver.

This was the history of the Smoky Hill Trail, 1859-1869, a

story of adventurers, explorers, prospectors, surveyors, Indians, stage men, soldiers and railroad men, combined with gold, the buffalo, and the elements of nature in a "stranger than fiction" story of the early West.

### Recommendations

Many years have passed since the last stage completed its journey over the Smoky Hill Route, however the historical value of the old trail should not be forgotten by the student of Western History. To preserve for posterity at least a fragment of the story of the trail, markers containing short, accurate inscriptions, should be erected at those station sites that can be definitely located.

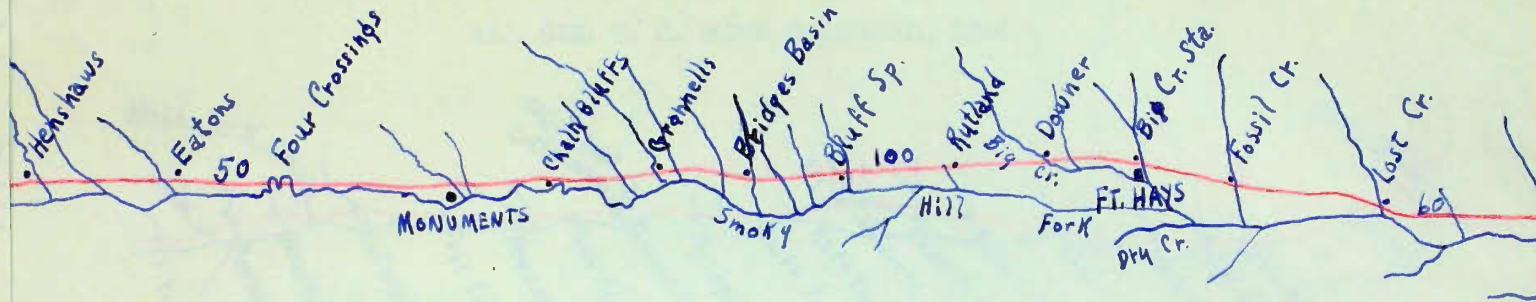
An intensive research should be carried forward in an endeavor to find any accounts concerning the amount of freight and number of passengers carried by the Smoky Hill Stage Lines.

Continued effort should be exerted in the hope of locating the original map which Lieutenant Julian Fitch claimed to have filed with his report of the 1865 survey of the Smoky Hill Route. The successful accomplishment of this latter task would help clarify the controversy which exists regarding the names and locations of some of the stations established by that survey party.

A comprehensive study of the construction of the railroad between Fort Riley and Denver would also be of interest.

# APPENDIX A

(A portion of)  
MAP SHOWING WAGON ROADS FROM FT. HARKER TO POND CREEK . . .  
1867



Copy of a Map Loaned by Gen'l Haines to Col. Merrill

## Distances

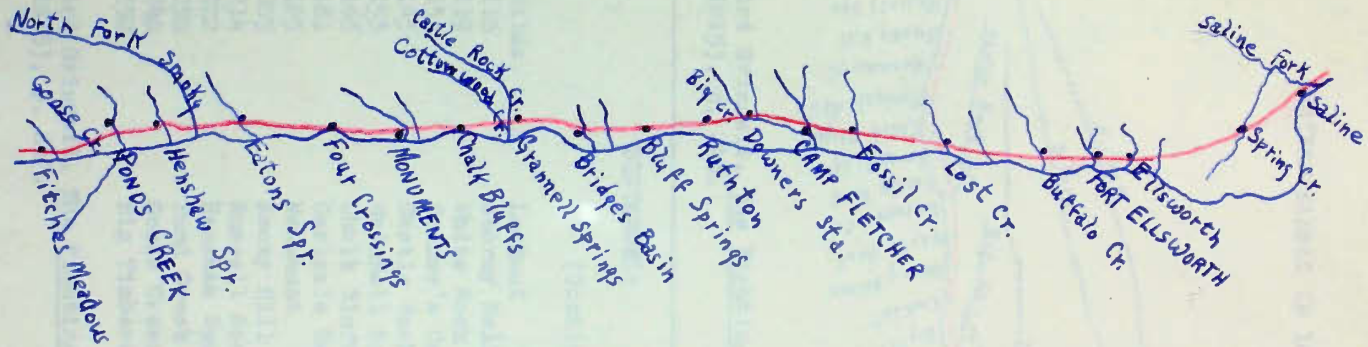
|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Pond Creek to |            |
| Monuments     | 50 398     |
| Fort Hays     | 100 498    |
| Fort Harker   | 80 558 (?) |



# APPENDIX B

(A portion of)  
MAP OF THE MILITARY DISTRICT KANSAS AND THE TERRITORIES

MAJ. GEN. G. M. DODGE COMMANDING, 1866



## DISTANCES

| SMOKY HILL ROUTE    |        | (Continued)     |        |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| FORT LEAVENWORTH to | Miles  | Bridges Basin   | 18     |
| FORT ELLSWORTH      | 220    | Grannell Spr.   | 12     |
| Buffalo Cr.         | 9      | Chalk Bluffs    | 13     |
| Lost Cr.            | 15     | MONUMENTS       | 14.349 |
| Fossil Cr.          | 14     | Four Crossings  | 12     |
| CAMP FLETCHER       | 14.257 | Eatons Spr.     | 11     |
| Downers Sta.        | 14     | Henshaw Spr.    | 13     |
| Ruth-ton            | 10     | PONDS CREEK     | 11.396 |
| Bluff Spr.          | 11     | Fitches Meadows | 14     |

Executed under the direction of  
Maj. Geo. T. Robinson, Chf. Engr.

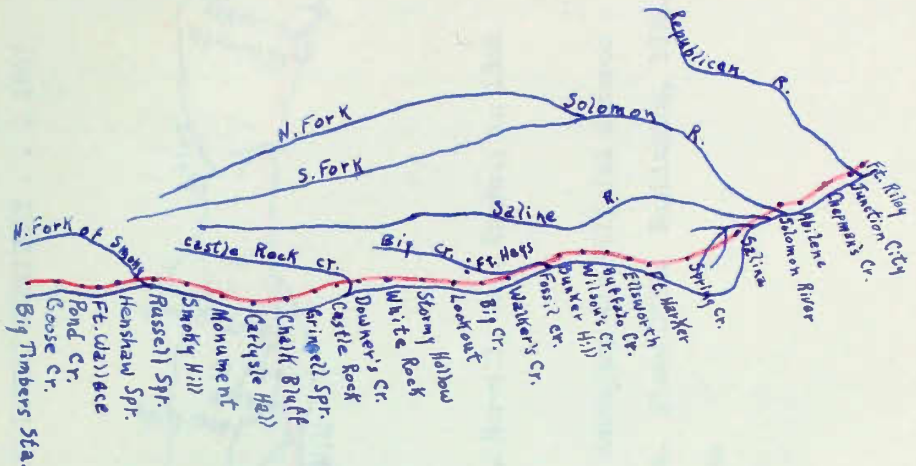
Drawn by T. H. Williams

Scale: 1" = 32 Stat. Miles.

R. STEVENSON & CO.,  
PHOTOGRAPH ROOMS,  
48 DELAWARE STREET,  
LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS.

# APPENDIX C

## WESTERN KANSAS IN 1867\*



\* George Bird Grinnell, The Fighting Cheyennes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 246.

### DISTANCES\*

#### Smoky Hill Route

(Continued)

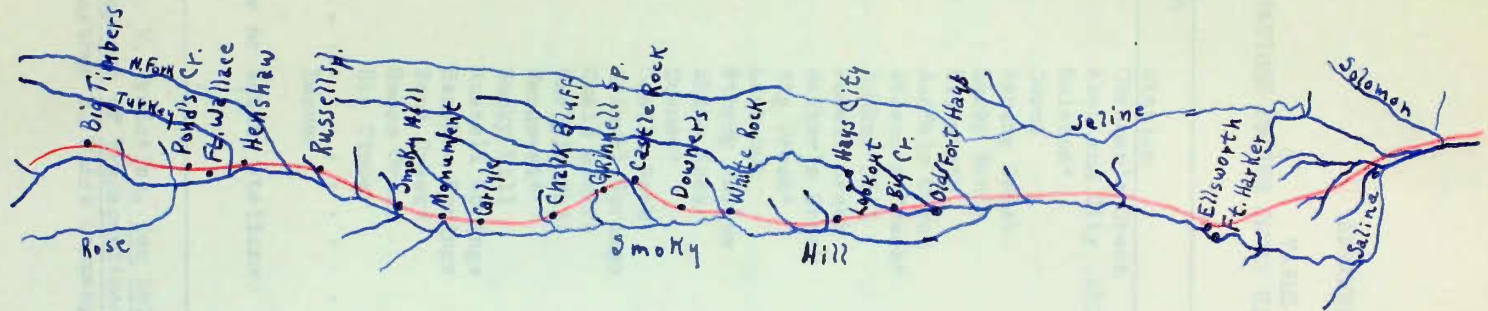
|                 |       |                  |     |
|-----------------|-------|------------------|-----|
| Leavenworth to: | Miles | Lookout          | 261 |
| Fort Riley      | 116   | Stormy Hollow    | 273 |
| Junction City   | 119   | White Rock       | 284 |
| Chapman's Creek | 131   | Downer's Creek   | 294 |
| Abilene         | 143   | Castle Rock      | 305 |
| Solomon River   | 153   | Grinnell Springs | 313 |
| Salina          | 166   | Chalk Bluff      | 326 |
| Spring Creek    | 181   | Carlyle Hall     | 334 |
| Ellsworth       | 195   | Monument         | 344 |
| Buffalo Creek   | 205   | Smoky Hill Sp.   | 356 |
| Wilson's Creek  | 214   | Russell Springs  | 366 |
| Bunker Hill     | 222   | Henshaw Springs  | 380 |
| Fossil Creek    | 230   | Pond Creek       | 391 |
| Walker's Creek  | 240   | Goose Creek      | 402 |
| Big Creek       | 252   | Big Timbers      | 412 |

\* George Bird Grinnell, The Fighting Cheyennes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 247.

APPENDIX D

(A portion of)

SECTION OF MAP OF THE STATE OF KANSAS AND TEXAS AND INDIAN TERRITORY . . . 1867



Kansas, comp'd under direction of Col. Wm. E. Merrill, Maj. Engrs., in 1868

From: Cowles, Calvin D., Compiler, Atlas to Accompany the Official Records  
of the Union and Confederate Armies. Plate CXIX. Washington, 1894.

Scale: 1" = 30 Miles



# APPENDIX E

TABLE IV  
STATIONS ON THE SMOKY HILL DIVISION IN 1866\*\*

| Miles between<br>stations | Station                 | Miles from<br>Junction City |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 12                        | Chapman's Creek         | 12                          |
| 13                        | Aberlone City (Abilene) | 25                          |
| 10                        | Solomon*                | 35                          |
| 10                        | Owens                   | 45                          |
| 13                        | Spring Creek            | 58                          |
| 14                        | Rocky Ranch             | 72                          |
| 10                        | Ellsworth               | 82                          |
| 10                        | Buffalo Creek           | 92                          |
| 9                         | Wilson's Creek*         | 101                         |
| 8                         | Bunker Hill             | 109                         |
| 8                         | Fossil Creek            | 117                         |
| 10                        | Walker's Creek          | 127                         |
| 12                        | Big Creek*              | 139                         |
| 9                         | Look Out                | 148                         |
| 12                        | Stormy Hollow           | 160                         |
| 11                        | White Rock              | 171                         |
| 10                        | Downer*                 | 181                         |
| 11                        | Castle Rock             | 192                         |
| 8                         | Grinnel Springs         | 200                         |
| 13                        | Chalk Bluffs            | 213                         |
| 8                         | Carlyle Hall            | 221                         |
| 10                        | Monument*               | 231                         |
| 12                        | Smoky Hill              | 243                         |
| 10                        | Russell Springs         | 253                         |
| 14                        | Henshaw Springs         | 267                         |
| 11                        | Pond Creek*             | 278                         |
| 11                        | Goose Creek             | 289                         |
| 10                        | Big Timber              | 299                         |
| .....                     | .....                   | .....                       |
|                           | Denver                  | 465                         |

\* Home or eating stations.

\*\* J. V. Frederick, Ben Holladay The Stagecoach King, A Chapter in the Development of Transcontinental Transportation (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1940), pp. 293-294.

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